

**PARIS IMPRESSIONS: CRITICS AND GIMMICKS IN THE ART WORLD OF  
ERROLL GARNER, 1957-58**

by

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# **PARIS IMPRESSIONS: CRITICS AND GIMMICKS IN THE ART WORLD OF**

## **ERROLL GARNER, 1957-58**

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University of Pittsburgh, 2017

This thesis examines how the events of Erroll Garner's European tour of 1957-58 informed the creation of his ensuing album, *Paris Impressions*. Applying Howard S. Becker's definition of "art world" to the global and capitalist landscape in which Garner found himself provides multiple perspectives for understanding his expected role, as artist, among a network of powerful jazz intermediaries. For the prominent, French theatre owners and booking agents, Garner was potential bait, unable to defend himself from negotiating a contract in a foreign language. From the vantage point of jazz critics, Garner was an easy target of a traditional jazz musician they could pit against more modern players in order to secure their membership as qualified judges in the art world. He was a valuable commodity as long as the record companies could continue to sell his albums and keep him from disrupting their own strategies. Unfortunately, for those intermediaries, it did not happen quite as they had planned. For the French theatre bullies, Garner had a secret weapon; for the critics, he had the last word; and for the record companies, his albums would continue to flow, on his terms. However, there was a buffer to whom credit is due. If it were not for his manager, Martha Glaser, the relationship between him and market influencers may have been all but lost. Together, they were able to overcome the obstacles of the long-awaited Parisian trip and capitalize on all its unpleasantness in the release of *Paris Impressions*.

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Erroll Garner had a dramatic opening day at the Paris Olympia on December 6, 1957. The club's gangster-type owner, Bruno Coquatrix, tried to trick him into playing additional concerts without pay. The series of events revolved around Columbia Records and their European affiliate company, Philips Records, as well as Garner's booking agent, Joe Glaser and manager, Martha Glaser (not related to Joe Glaser). The months of preparation and relentless public relations efforts it took to finally get Garner to Europe is indicative of the persistent Erroll Garner / Martha Glaser "promotional campaign" that sought to turn a disagreeable experience into a creative opportunity. The resulting product was a double LP, titled *Paris Impressions*, in which Garner plays harpsichord on four tracks.

Using Howard S. Becker's definition as a framework, this paper explores the "art world" that surrounded Garner's inspiration for *Paris Impressions* (1958). Becker describes his concept of an "art world" as a "network of people whose cooperative activity, organized via their joint knowledge of conventional means of doing things, produces the kind of art works that art world is noted for." The tautology of his explanation reflects the ways in which the production and consumption processes reify the evaluation and persistence of an art world. Becker's book, *Art Worlds*, deals specifically with the concepts of reputation and implications of the art world idea, connecting critics, distribution chains, managers and artists from a sociological standpoint. In addition to acknowledging the individuals who affected Garner's placement within the art world, this paper will also recognize the political, economic, and cultural landscape in the late 1950s.

Garner had recently returned from his first European tour as a headlining artist, where he spent three weeks working with his trio at the acclaimed Paris Olympia Theatre, when he recorded *Paris Impressions*. On the surface, the album would seem to be an affectionate nod to the French public, his trip the catalyst of new-found inspiration. However, analysis of archival material and a closer look at the French media suggests that the LP's release might have been more a sweet revenge in terms of Garner reclaiming agency of his own artistry. The album is interesting for two reasons. First, it is a rare instance, among the pianist's many recordings, when he chose to play a different instrument, the harpsichord. Secondly, all of the titles are themed around Paris and the French aesthetic, including twelve originals (such as "When Paris Cries" and "Moroccan Quarter") and six covers (for example, "I Love Paris," and "Le Vie En Rose"). This paper will investigate Garner's artistic decision for using the harpsichord and, possibly more revealing, what prompted him to dedicate an album to Paris.

The first section (["Comment allez vous?": Planning the Trip](#)) considers the success of Garner's *Concert By The Sea* as a means for his European sales potential and unpacks the negotiation process between him and industry executives in preparation for the tour. The second part (["Le Pour et Le Contre": French Atmosphere](#)) situates Garner within the art world of jazz in Paris, with particular attention to the divisive environment that placed critics either on the side of "traditionalists" or "modernists." The third (["Paris Blues": Garner in Paris](#)) examines a scheme by Parisian intermediaries to take advantage of Garner and the press's reaction to his engagement at the Olympia. The analysis of a particular letter he wrote to his manager, Martha Glaser, provides Garner's intimate reaction to the events which took place during his trip. The fourth



section ([“Every Pianist Needs a Gimmick”: Return Home](#)) examines *Paris Impressions*, from conception to distribution, as the culmination of factors surrounding his Parisian experience.

Rather than seek to fully chronicle Garner’s life during this period, the emphasis of specific archival materials allows for a broader discussion of the surrounding art world. The emotional aspect is captured in the abundant communications between Garner and Martha Glaser, perhaps the most telling display of Garner’s internal world. They continuously re-negotiated their roles and ceded control to the other, when required, in order to sustain a working relationship. Their business decisions were driven by external forces, namely the public’s reaction that guided the strategies of record companies and distribution systems. Influencing the demand for Garner’s talent proved to be one of Glaser’s greatest challenges and concerns. Considering that reputation directly affects distribution, her efforts seemed to acknowledge the mirroring effect in an art world’s production and consumption processes. She was sensitive to Garner, the artist; yet she was acutely aware that, if he was to succeed in the industry, financial stability and a solid reputation were imperative. Therefore, her role as a liaison between his talent and the art world provides valuable insight into the victories and obstacles they faced in trying to maintain Garner’s agency over his creative output. The eminent figures that challenged them, which will be discussed in this paper, include prominent voices of the press, powerful music industry executives, and one particular French impresario. The release of *Paris Impressions* arguably allowed Garner to reclaim his agency, making a defining mark on the art world.

## 2. “COMMENT ALLEZ VOUS?": PLANNING THE TRIP

On November 7, 1956, Erroll Garner's manager, Martha Glaser, requested: "Erroll - Please make following phone calls: 1) Phil MacKeller - CKFH - Toronto (about 6 in evening); 2) Joe Rico - Buffalo - Elmwood 0706; 3) Mitch Reed - WAVZ - New Haven, Connecticut; 4) Boy Clayton - WHDH - Boston. Tell [Reed and Clayton] that you open at Celebrity Club, Providence, Monday, November 12 - Thank them all for the help. The only way we'll keep your album on top at Columbia is to keep plugging. You believe me."<sup>1</sup>

The album they were trying to keep "on top at Columbia" was *Concert By The Sea* - an album that was only distributed, to begin with, because of Glaser's insistence to Columbia Record Company. It was the recording of the 1955 concert in Carmel, California that started the five-year contract between Garner and Columbia - a relationship that would eventually end in a bitter lawsuit. Accompanying Garner on piano were Denzil Best on drums, and Eddie Calhoun on bass.<sup>2</sup> By 1958, it had become the record company's best-selling jazz album and had peaked the charts in other countries as well.<sup>3</sup> Its success, due in part to the personal reminders from

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<sup>1</sup> Martha Glaser to Erroll Garner, 7 November 1956, Box 3, Folder 2, Correspondence 1957-1993, Erroll Garner Archive, University of Pittsburgh Library.

<sup>2</sup> Geri Allen and Robin Kelley, liner notes to Erroll Garner, *The Complete Concert By The Sea*, Columbia Records 88875120842, 2015, compact disc.

<sup>3</sup> "Award For Garner," *Pittsburgh Courier*, 22 February 1958, 17.

Glaser to Garner to “keep plugging”, might have been the lynchpin that would secure his spot for a European tour.

Joining him on tour would be Calhoun and, replacing Best on drums, Kelly Martin. Garner had started playing with Calhoun only two weeks before *Concert By The Sea* was recorded.<sup>4</sup> Martin met Calhoun at the trio’s first performance together at the Copa Club in Pittsburgh in mid-October of 1956.<sup>5</sup> They would have time to gel before their European tour, especially as their schedule picked-up in March 1957 for dates in St. Louis, Detroit, and Los Angeles. In May, they played in Wyoming, Wisconsin, and Toronto.<sup>6</sup> In between touring, Garner was busy recording a solo piano album in February, *Soliloquy*, and he finished the sessions for *Other Voices* with Mitch Miller’s Orchestra in May - both under Columbia Records.<sup>7</sup> With Glaser’s direction, he promoted himself through radio and television; in April, for example, he guest-starred on the Mitch Miller and Steve Allen shows.<sup>8</sup>

On January 12, 1957, Glaser wrote Francee Church, assistant to Joe Glaser, to inquire about “Erroll’s long-talked about European tour,” - they had been trying to plan it for the past ten months.<sup>9</sup> A European trip in 1956 was held-up in order to avoid “other attractions,” which

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<sup>4</sup> James M. Doran, *Erroll Garner: The Most Happy Piano* (New Jersey: Scarecrow Press, 1985), 89.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid. 93

<sup>6</sup> Martha Glaser to Erroll Garner, 7 November 1956, Box 3, Folder 2.

<sup>7</sup> Doran, 250-55.

<sup>8</sup> Martha Glaser to Erroll Garner, 7 November 1956, Box 3, Folder 2.

<sup>9</sup> Robert O’Meally, *Lady Day: The Many Faces of Billie Holiday* (New York: Arcade Publishing, 1991), 191. Martha Glaser to Francee Church, 12 January 1957, Box 3, Folder 7, Correspondence 1957-1993, Erroll Garner Archive, University of Pittsburgh Library. Martha Glaser to Erroll Garner, 6 March 1956, Box 3, Folder 2, Correspondence 1957-1993, Erroll Garner Archive, University of Pittsburgh Library.

included other clients of Associated that had already been booked there.<sup>10</sup> Glaser was setting up Garner's year-ahead schedule, leaving time in the summer for a possible trip abroad and did not "want him left without choice locations here while we spend another season waiting."<sup>11</sup> Glaser added, "If the Folkspark people had come through with round trip transportation, I'd take it. A taste of Erroll there would break it wide open, I feel."<sup>12</sup> The Folkspark location was probably in Europe, given that Glaser was expecting the hosts to pay for round-trip tickets. She must have declined Garner's participation at Folkspark because it would not have made sense, financially, to go there without others dates already lined-up. By the end of the month, however, she would regret the decision, as other opportunities became available that might have made a trip to Folkspark worthwhile. In a letter dated January 30, she wrote the following to Columbia's Artists and Repertoire director, Nat Shapiro:

Canetti cabled — wants [M]ay dates — big drag — now we don't have the [J]une [F]olkspark dates which fell out waiting for him - if you have any influence there, wonderf[u]l — [I] would appreciate it if you would call [H]arold [D]avison, the [E]nglish promoter, (29-3 Regent St, Eros House, London w. 2) — and give him a pep talk on [E]rroll, records - etc. these guys just don't seem to know, according to our office here, how good [E]rroll is. I wish England would set an exchange for Erroll — If you hear anything about jazz on the Edinburgh festival, we'd dig it the most. Needless to say, we're most grateful for anything you are able to do to stimulate interest in [Erroll Garner] there. I'm so tired of hearing... "we don't get any requests for Erroll from Europe"...I can't believe this. Hope you and your wife are having a wonderful time. Again, most grateful for any interest you can engender which will enhance Associated's booking efforts in Europe.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Martha Glaser to Francee Church, 12 January 1957, Box 3, Folder 7.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Martha Glaser to Nat Shapiro, 30 January 1957, Box 3, Folder 7, Correspondence 1957-1993, Erroll Garner Archive, University of Pittsburgh Library.

The man who had sent the request for dates in May was Jacques Canetti, an executive at Philips Records, the company responsible for distributing Columbia's product in Europe.

According to Howard Becker's *Art Worlds*, distribution is a response to reputation, and vice versa. The direct relationship between album sales and an artist's popularity move in a "circular" pattern, affecting each other negatively or positively.<sup>14</sup> Glaser was pushing for the latter, hoping that Shapiro would use his clout to promote Garner's talent overseas. Obviously frustrated by the lack of interest and the scant invitations for Garner in Europe, she most likely declined Canetti's offer for the same reason she had with Folksparke; but her efforts would soon pay off.

As of January 1957, *Concert By The Sea* was the second best-selling jazz record at Columbia, and climbing, which would have caught the attention of French impresario and theater owner, Bruno Coquatrix, during one of his talent-scouting trips to the United States.<sup>15</sup> In April 1957, he signed a number of jazz acts for engagements at his venue in Paris; not least impressive were Duke Ellington for an October 23 start date, Erroll Garner for December 6, and Billie Holiday for the following 21st of March.<sup>16</sup> Coquatrix's efforts were driven, at least in part, by the potential for financial gain, insisting that half of all performance earnings from foreign acts be kept in France. Searching outside national boundaries for headliners was, he believed, not only essential for business, but also benefitted the artist who "has to be international and work to as

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<sup>14</sup> Howard S. Becker, *Art Worlds* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982), 95.

<sup>15</sup> Martha Glaser to Erroll Garner, 12 January 1957, Box 3, Folder 7, Correspondence 1957-1993, Erroll Garner Archive, University of Pittsburgh Library.

<sup>16</sup> "France's Coquatrix, on Visit Here, Bids Stars Get Hep to O'seas Rep," *Variety*, 10 April 1957, 73.

wide a variety of audiences if he's to grow as well."<sup>17</sup> American "stars" became known throughout Europe through two mediums - records and films, according to him.<sup>18</sup> Therefore, continued record sales and access to foreign audiences that partnerships with Associated Booking and Columbia Records afforded to Garner, were essential.

In telegram cables on May 1, 1957 to Herb Lyon at the Chicago Tribune and Irg Kupcinet at the Chicago Sun Times, Martha Glaser beamed about Garner's latest "fantastic San Francisco run," *Concert By The Sea* being the "top album in [the] Bay Area," new works from his four ballet suites "he is writing and orchestrating for [a] forthcoming Columbia album," and announced the upcoming concert at Loyola University in Chicago on May 5. In another cable to Mike Kaplan at the *Daily Variety* in Hollywood, California, she added, "[The] engagement with Erroll here broke all Blackhawk records. [He] closed three weeks last night...Erroll joins me in sending regards and thanks."<sup>19</sup> Kaplan may have had a hand in promoting the concerts at the renowned San Francisco club and in pushing album sales on the West Coast. Glaser responded by returning a business favor, opening the telegram: "Dear Mike, André Hodeir, French jazz critic and author arriving [in] Los Angeles tonight auspices State Department. Doing [a] survey [of] jazz in U.S. I suggested he call you."<sup>20</sup>

On the same day Glaser wrote Kaplan, she and Garner had to make a quick decision on whether or not to accept the terms of the Paris trip. The proposal was to have Garner's trio play

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<sup>17</sup> "France's Coquatrix," *Variety*, 73.

<sup>18</sup> "France's Coquatrix," *Variety*, 73.

<sup>19</sup> Martha Glaser to Mike Kaplan, 2 May 1957, Box 3, Folder 1, Correspondence 1957-1993, Erroll Garner Archive, University of Pittsburgh Library.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

two shows per day, and one on Sunday, at Coquatrix's Olympia Theatre. The hosts would be providing them a meal on the days when they played two shows. In addition, the trio was allowed to make plans to play in nearby towns one time per week, as long as they bear the cost of transportation themselves. One might suspect that Glaser's final valuation was around \$17,250 for the group for three weeks, as \$5,750 per week had been the trio's rate a year earlier, in May of 1956. Yet with mounting praise of *Concert By The Sea* and record-breaking attendance at the Blackhawk, she may have thought that it was time to raise Garner's fee. Joe Glaser's office needed an "answer immediately," and any choice would affect Glaser's ability to elevate future prices. Planning for a European tour had begun over a year ago; and now, the fate of it would be determined by a hurried financial decision.<sup>21</sup>

Glaser sent the approval for the Paris contracts on May 2, after she had cleared the decision with Garner.<sup>22</sup> However, in June 1957, the German *Jazz Echo* magazine reported that Garner had deferred his Europe tour, evidence that plans were still subject to change.<sup>23</sup> Publicized announcements of a delay or cancellation never bode well for an artist's image. Once the press was notified that Garner would be touring Europe, booking agents or theater owners would have had the upper hand in trying to add conditions to his contract. One month later, however, the British magazine *Melody Maker* confirmed that the tour was back on, with final details still undetermined.<sup>24</sup> Finally, in September, Europe prepared to officially bring the "great

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<sup>21</sup> Francee Church to Martha Glaser, 1 May 1957, Box 3, Folder 1, Correspondence 1957-1993, Erroll Garner Archive, University of Pittsburgh Library.

<sup>22</sup> Martha Glaser to Erroll Garner, 2 May 1957, Box 3, Folder 7, Correspondence 1957-1993, Erroll Garner Archive, University of Pittsburgh Library.

<sup>23</sup> "Jazz-News," *Jazz-Echo*, June 1957, 47, translation by the author.

<sup>24</sup> "Jazz-News," *Jazz-Echo*, July 1957, 44, translation by the author.

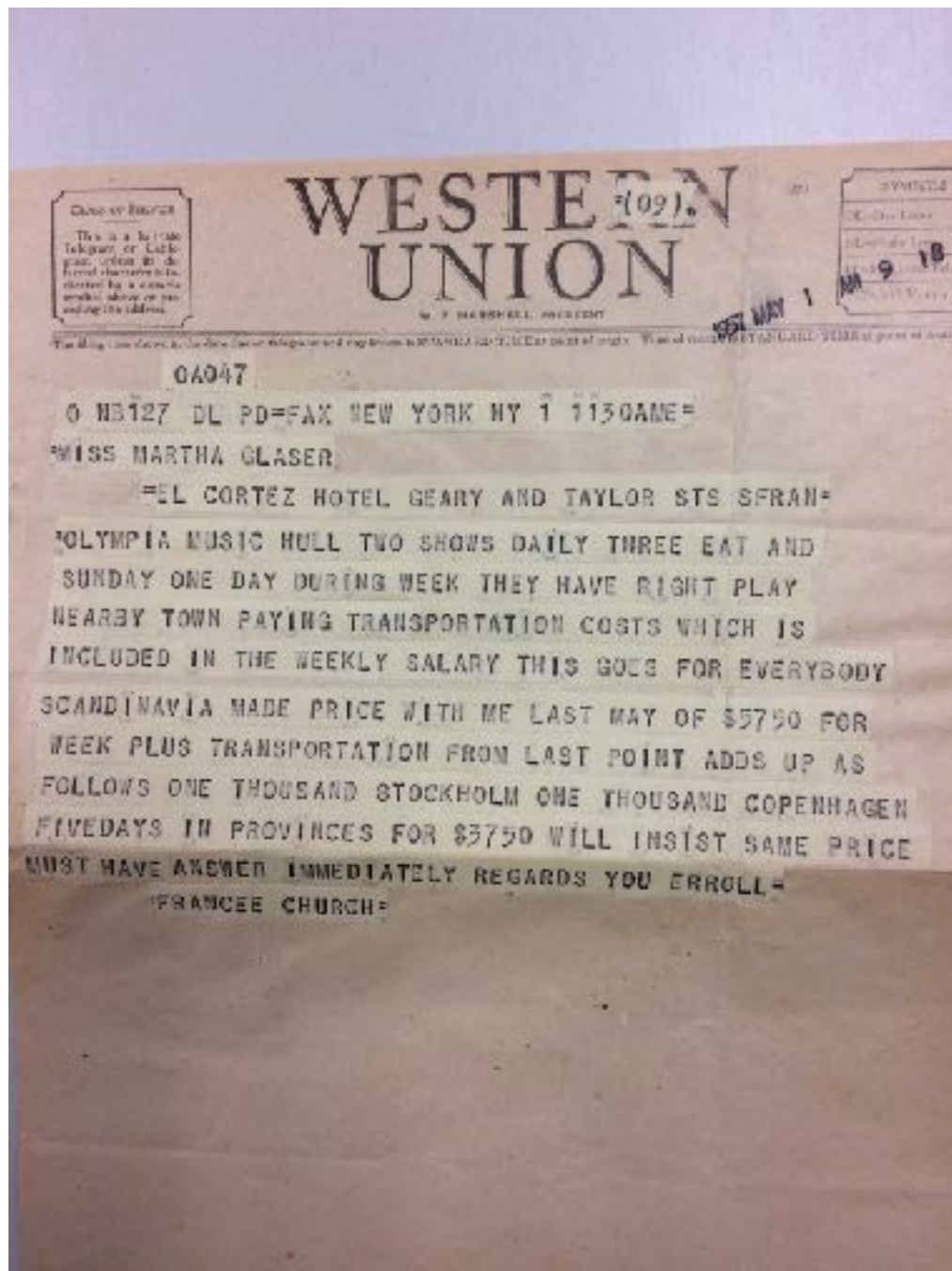


Figure 1. Telegram Francee Church to Martha Glaser

pianist” to France where he would start his tour on December 6, 1957. The French *Jazz Magazine* announced the plans for a three-week engagement at the Paris Olympia Theatre, captioning a photo of Garner and Mitch Miller, who had recently completed the *Other Voices*



album for Columbia together.<sup>25</sup> He was also scheduled to play in Brussels on January 4 and Amsterdam on January 5. Offers also included a one-night performance in Switzerland on December 28 for \$1,000 and a 9-day tour in England for \$6,000 starting on January 11, but Garner eventually decline both.<sup>26</sup>

The scheduling and financial conflicts surrounding Garner's tour reflects a broader discussion regarding the agency of an artist versus the agency of those who support and influence them - managers, recording companies, booking agents, publicists and theater owners. Maintaining the relationships between interested parties requires a balance of power and compromises from all sides. The artist's manager, although an intermediary between the artist and outside influences, often aligns him/herself as a proponent of the artist's personal desires. As a result, the business association between an artist and manager can become intertwined with private life, as was the case with Louis Armstrong and his manager, Joe Glaser - also the owner of Associated Booking.<sup>27</sup> The partnership can also be strengthened by a marriage, wherein the female has historically played the role of manager to a male jazz musician, as witnessed in the partnership between Charles and Sue Mingus, for example.<sup>28</sup> Garner and Glaser's frequent and open communication is testimony to the blurred lines between their personal, professional, and affectionate bond, providing a unique opportunity to consider how their relationship may have

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<sup>25</sup> "Jazz Information," *Jazz Magazine*, September 1957, No. 30, 9.

<sup>26</sup> Martha Glaser to Erroll Garner, 23 September 1957, Box 3, Folder 7, Correspondence 1957-1993, Erroll Garner Archive, University of Pittsburgh Library. Erroll Garner to Joe Glaser, 18 November 1957, Box 3, Folder 2, Correspondence 1957-1993, Erroll Garner Archive, University of Pittsburgh Library.

<sup>27</sup> Terry Teachout, *Pops: A Life of Louis Armstrong* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2009), 102 and elsewhere.

<sup>28</sup> Sue Graham Mingus, *Tonight at Noon: A Love Story* (Cambridge: Da Capo Press, 2002).

directed business and artistic decisions. For instance, Garner had met members of Glaser's family; in fact, she referred to him as "uncle" when speaking about her niece.<sup>29</sup> There is a range of romantic emotion, at least on her end, from jealousy - "don't have any strangers hanging around, or in your room. and [I]'m not kidding. [O]ne more headline of that type and we'd both might as well forget it." - to flirtation- "I borrowed two of your t-shirts - for me - hope it's ok."<sup>30</sup> Glaser's desire for the art world to respect Garner, then, would not only reflect positively of her role as his manager, but also of her personal involvement in his affairs. Part of their business strategy was to portray Garner as someone who was not so eager to perform that he would succumb to the demands of executives and critics. The "master plan," as showcased in *Metronome* magazine in August 1957, was one "in which the only variable is Erroll's artistry."<sup>31</sup> The article paints an image of Garner as someone who is free of the commercial aspects of the art world. Glaser states, "there's no need, here, for a concerted drive toward public acceptance. Erroll already has that; the plan revolves around Erroll's personal achievements and creative goals."<sup>32</sup> Because the article's publication was approaching the time Garner would be leaving, she may have felt it necessary to downplay the importance for his career of securing such an opening. She made it clear that, although Garner was not convinced he needed to tour Europe, he

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<sup>29</sup> Martha Glaser to Erroll Garner, 14 March 1956, Box 3, Folder 2, Correspondence 1957-1993, Erroll Garner Archive, University of Pittsburgh Library.

<sup>30</sup> Martha Glaser to Erroll Garner, 9 March 1956, Box 3, Folder 2, Correspondence 1957-1993, Erroll Garner Archive, University of Pittsburgh Library. Martha Glaser to Erroll Garner, 9 November 1956, Box 3, Folder 2, Correspondence 1957-1993, Erroll Garner Archive, University of Pittsburgh Library.

<sup>31</sup> "Personal Managers: Glaser Garners Garner," *Metronome*, August 1957, 74/8, 19.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

found the opportunity congruent with his artistic strategy of “self-fulfillment,” driven by “a desire on his part for greater understanding and achievement.”<sup>33</sup>

Regardless of the romanticized image portrayed by the article, Garner was not in a financial position to ignore outside market forces, especially the demands of top executives and influencers on the performance circuit. On November 5, 1957, Joe Glaser, with whom he had signed a two-year contract beginning in April 1956, expressed disappointment at Garner’s refusal to open at the Olympia on December 4 instead of the previously-agreed upon date of December 6. Joe Glaser explained to Martha Glaser that “in making up [this] contract so long ago, Mr. Coquatrix miscalculated and see[s] no reason” for not being accommodating.<sup>34</sup> Joe Glaser advised that they “take advantage of this, especially as Mr. Coquatrix is [a] valuable operator and has cooperated with us regarding Erroll.” From Joe Glaser’s perspective, Garner did not have anything scheduled for the first week in December and should, therefore, be available to start on December 4. Not obliging to Coquatrix’s request, Joe Glaser assured, would not be good “for future diplomatic relations with foreign promoters and theatre operators.” He was also “bewildered” that Garner had turned down a one-week, \$1,000 per night, offer to play in Germany during the tour. The deal in Germany would only require that he play one concert per night.<sup>35</sup>

Martha Glaser and Garner’s initial reaction to Associated Booking’s telegram is unknown. As proof in their correspondence the following day, one could surmise that they were

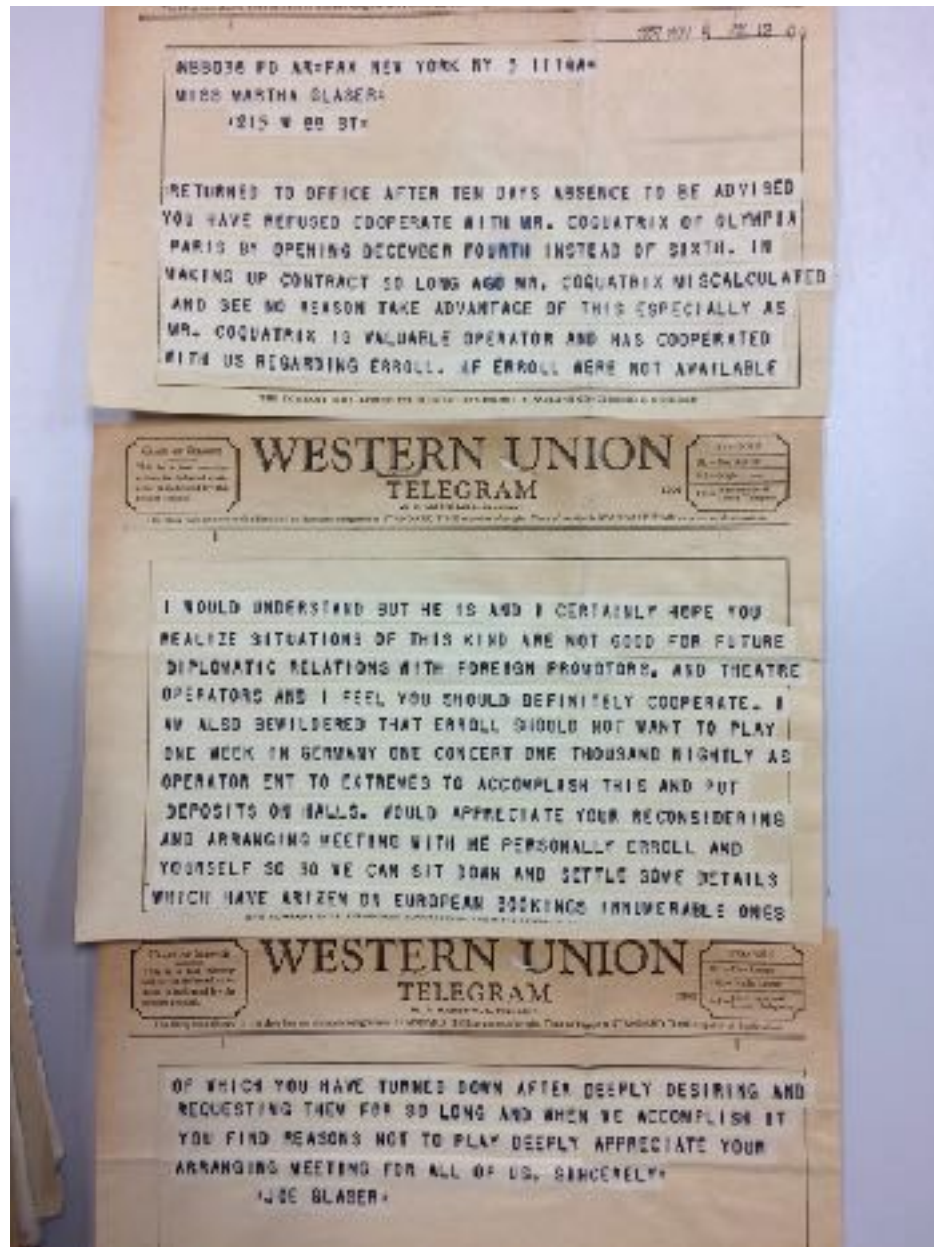
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<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Joe Glaser to Martha Glaser, 5 November 1957, Box 3, Folder 1, Correspondence 1957-1993, Erroll Garner Archive, University of Pittsburgh Library.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

unshaken by it. Her jovial letter to him, dated November 6, 1957, at 9:30 pm, opened with “comment allez vous? ([F]rench, for “how are you”)” and was followed by a rapid stream of one-line bursts, mainly to discuss day-to-day matters.<sup>36</sup> (She was busy getting Garner’s new



[Figure 2. Telegram Joe Glaser to Martha Glaser](#)

<sup>36</sup> Martha Glaser to Erroll Garner, 6 November 1957, Box 3, Folder 2, Correspondence 1957-1993, Erroll Garner Archive, University of Pittsburgh Library.

apartment ready and operating his business affairs while he was on the road with his trio.)<sup>37</sup> Since she cleared all business matters through Garner, she may have mentioned Joe Glaser's telegram to him over the telephone, leaving the possibility that Garner wanted to explain himself, personally, to Joe Glaser.<sup>38</sup> Garner simply might not have wanted to extend his availability in Germany or to Coquatrix in Paris, perhaps the same reason he had previously declined the offers for England and Switzerland.

In the meantime, the departure date was drawing nearer. On November 10, 1957, Garner sent a telegram to Hughes Panassié, owner of Le Hot Club de France and a prominent, yet contentious, voice of the European jazz scene. It is likely that Martha Glaser actually sent the telegram and signed Garner's name, which offered a brief "congratulations" and his anticipating meeting Panassié.<sup>39</sup> Had she reached out to Panassié in a reactionary attempt to boost public relations that Garner seemed to have muffled with Coquatrix? In any case, there were still unresolved issues with Associated Booking as of November 16, as she urged Garner to attend to "affairs regarding Europe with [Joe] Glaser."<sup>40</sup> She continues, "I'm afraid that your personal entrance into [this] matter has only increased the confusion - this is NOT your fault. They choose to distort everything you said. I would like to wrap it up, pronto."<sup>41</sup> A compromise was reached as Garner agreed to start on December 5, even though he would not be headlining that night. It

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Martha Glaser to Erroll Garner, 16 January 1958, Box 3, Folder 9, Correspondence 1957-1993, Erroll Garner Archive, University of Pittsburgh Library.

<sup>39</sup> Erroll Garner to Hughes Panassié, 10 November 1957, Box 3, Folder 1, Correspondence 1957-1993, Erroll Garner Archive, University of Pittsburgh Library.

<sup>40</sup> Martha Glaser to Erroll Garner, 16 November 1957, Box 3, Folder 2, Correspondence 1957-1993, Erroll Garner Archive, University of Pittsburgh Library.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

was an act of good will on his part, seeing as the Olympia's marketing posters had already been made (which, disappointingly, did not include an "extra added attraction" for him on the bill).<sup>42</sup>

Positive reactions and widespread media publicity from the tour could mean more record sales in Europe and more recording opportunities in the United States. As Martha Glaser reminded Garner in a letter, only weeks before he was to leave, work was "getting scarcer."<sup>43</sup> Not only were record sales crucial, but finding other ways "to produce income from other sources - films, composing, TV, etc." would be imperative.<sup>44</sup> Glaser's persistence is not to be overlooked. Her role in making sure he was prepared with new luggage and a planned wardrobe was only a small part of the total efforts which swayed the public's perception of him.<sup>45</sup> As a *Metronome* article described, Garner had been hesitant and grumbling about the trip abroad - "Nothing against Paris, he just doesn't like to travel."<sup>46</sup> Glaser even scheduled overlapping appointments the day before "so that Erroll was never left unattended for a moment to be sure he didn't miss the plane." Barely packed, three hours before departure, Garner was sweeping his apartment floor, unable to do much else. Glaser had locked all the doors so that he would not go missing, including the one to his closet! After almost taking-off without his passport - the plane had to taxi back for it, which was in Glaser's purse - he and the trio were finally on their way to Paris.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Erroll Garner to Joe Glaser, 18 November 1957, Box 3, Folder 2, Correspondence 1957-1993, Erroll Garner Archive, University of Pittsburgh Library.

<sup>43</sup> Martha Glaser to Erroll Garner, 10 November 1957, Box 3, Folder 2, Correspondence 1957-1993, Erroll Garner Archive, University of Pittsburgh Library.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> Martha Glaser to Erroll Garner, 16 November 1957, Box 3, Folder 2.

<sup>46</sup> Bill Coss, "A Reporter's Notebook: Erroll Garner," *Metronome*, February 1958, 75/2, 50.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

It would be Garner's first European tour as a headlining artist. He would be honored with the Grand Prix du Disque, a prestigious award given to recording artists each year in different categories of music, presented to him by the President of the French National Assembly, André Le Troquer, and accompanied by a formal luncheon.<sup>48</sup> (Garner had previously won a Grand Prix du Disque in 1950 for his *Play, Piano Play* record, the first ever awarded in the jazz category.<sup>49</sup> Furthermore, he had played in Europe before, at a festival in Paris in 1948, but not as the group's leader.<sup>50</sup>) His winning record would be buried at the Circle Interallié in a lead-cased "time capsule," the first such honor for a jazz musician.<sup>51</sup> The trio would also play at other venues in Munich, Brussels, and Amsterdam, and spend one day with the British press. He would return home in January with six awards in total, including a prize presented by superstar French actress Danielle Darrieux for top pianist by *DownBeat*'s 1956 readers' poll.<sup>52</sup> The awards alone might indicate that Garner's Parisian engagement would have been nothing short of enjoyable. It was quite the contrary; Garner's spirit would be hurt and, professionally, he would be "cloaked in silence," if not by a single incident which would occur at Coquatrix's Olympia Theatre.<sup>53</sup> In

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<sup>48</sup> "Erroll Garner primé deux fois," *Jazz Magazine*, January 1958, No. 34, 11, translation by author and Nathalie Minetti.

<sup>49</sup> James Roddan, "Erroll Garner. An Appreciation," *Jazz Monthly*, 1958, 4/8, 6.

<sup>50</sup> John Chilton, *The Song of the Hawk: The Life and Recordings of Coleman Hawkins* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1993), 248.

<sup>51</sup> Henry Kahn, "Erroll Garner Says - Every Pianist Needs a Gimmick," *Melody Maker*, 21 December 1957, 3. Martha Glaser, liner notes to Erroll Garner, *Paris Impressions*, Columbia Records C2L 9, 1958, Vinyl.

<sup>52</sup> "Back From Europe," *Pittsburgh Courier*, 25 January 1958, 9. Coss, "A Reporter's Notebook," 50.

<sup>53</sup> Martha Glaser to Goddard Lieberman, 8 December 1957, Box 3, Folder 1, Correspondence 1957-1993, Erroll Garner Archive, University of Pittsburgh Library.

order to understand the full scope of Garner's Parisian experience, the next section will recognize the political and cultural atmosphere in France in the late 1950s.



### 3. “LE POUR ET LE CONTRE”: FRENCH ATMOSPHERE

After World War II, the French government fought to sustain its fading empire, which would eventually vanish in 1958.<sup>54</sup> While French priest and activist, Abbé Pierre, was leading campaigns to bring awareness to homelessness and a housing crisis that plagued Paris in the early 1950s, a proliferation of American consumer goods, business models, and military bases challenged previous notions of Parisians’ lived experiences.<sup>55</sup> Complicated and driven by Cold War politics, the concept of culture in France was in a period of radical transformation.<sup>56</sup> On one hand, an emancipative quality of the jazz commodity was being celebrated at French trade shows, like the first International Salon du Jazz in 1950; on the other hand, Algerian dissenters were being silenced as they tried to break free from their French colonizers.<sup>57</sup> There was a similar disconnect in the United States. In an effort to advance America’s interests in the Cold War, the U.S. State Department sponsored sixteen tours led by eleven African American bandleaders, including Dizzy Gillespie and Louis Armstrong, between 1956 and 1969; there

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<sup>54</sup> Celeste Day Moore, “Race in Translation: Producing, Performing, and Selling African-American Music in Greater France, 1944-74” (Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago, 2014), 8.

<sup>55</sup> Luc Sante, *The Other Paris* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2015), 69. Moore, “Race in Translation,” 20.

<sup>56</sup> Moore, 27, 164-65.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid, 181.

were also twelve tours led by seven white bandleaders. Meanwhile, the remnants of Jim Crow pervaded the American market, denying black musicians access to the same opportunities as white musicians in every aspect, from earnings to performance practices to travel accommodations.<sup>58</sup> In her dissertation, “Race in Translation: Producing, Performing, and Selling African-American Music in Greater France, 1944-74,” Celeste Day Moore points out that, although black internationalism was monitored by the United States government, other Cold War competitors, especially France, had an interest in directing and overseeing the global reach of African-American music. The gatekeepers of this cultural influence, or, as Moore called them, “Atlantic intermediaries,” were not only French-speaking, but were committed to preserving its “authentic” quality, making it accessible to French audiences.<sup>59</sup>

When, in a 1946 article of *Jazz Hot*, French musicologist André Hodeir announced that Charlie Parker and Dizzy Gillespie signaled “a renewal of the music of jazz,” he started an intellectual war among the French critics.<sup>60</sup> In one camp, Hughes Panassié, who thought that true jazz must contain the sounds of traditional New Orleans and Chicago-style playing. Panassié had owned the *Jazz Hot* magazine but would step away, ceding it to the other camp led by Hodeir, Boris Vian and Charles Delaunay. Delaunay had been business partners with Panassié at the magazine and at Le Hot Club de France. However, Delaunay’s alignment with the idea of modernizing jazz by way of the Bebop movement put his camp at odds with Panassié’s, who

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<sup>58</sup> Ingrid Monson, *Freedom Sounds: Civil Rights Call Out to Jazz and Africa* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 26, 123.

<sup>59</sup> Moore, 24.

<sup>60</sup> Roscoe Seldon Suddarth, “French Stewardship of Jazz: The Case of France Musique and France Culture” (MA thesis, University of Maryland, College Park, 2008), 17.

managed to remove Delaunay from Le Hot Club.<sup>61</sup> The promotional efforts by both sides, accented by their preferences for black musicians, saw that Paris became a coveted performance destination for many jazz artists. Beginning in 1958, Jazz at the Philharmonic, which was started by American record executive Norman Granz in 1944, was entrusted to Delaunay to organize the annual concerts in France.<sup>62</sup> Boris Vian helped promote jazz as an “intellectual” music, introducing philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre - who famously wrote: “Jazz is like bananas; it must be consumed on the spot” - to Charlie Parker and Miles Davis in 1949.<sup>63</sup> Such exchanges were efforts by Moore’s Atlantic intermediaries to gain power, as they “self-consciously tried to embody the encounter with African-American music.”<sup>64</sup> The contradicting forces of imperial desire and resistance, she argues, were invested in African-American music by the Atlantic intermediaries - critics, writers, booking agents, and radio personnel who helped to define and make accessible the jazz tradition through various channels.<sup>65</sup>

French artist, Pierre Merlin, was one such Atlantic intermediary who disseminated the jazz tradition by non-musical means. Merlin was commissioned by the Vogue record label to design cover art, using a palette of only two colors, to accompany jazz records that often did not include liner notes. In this way, Merlin was attempting to translate the human perspective and physical quality of musicians into a simple visual image.<sup>66</sup> There are obvious limitations to

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<sup>61</sup> Ibid, 13-17.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid, 15.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid, 16. Ralph de Toledano, *Frontiers of Jazz* (New York: F. Ungar Publishing Company, 1966), 64. Suddarth, “French Stewardship,” 16.

<sup>64</sup> Moore, 24.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid, 8-9.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid, 195.

visual art that simply cannot portray a live performance. After experiencing Erroll Garner in concert in 1948, one French reporter noted that “the record has given us a very accurate idea of the music.”<sup>67</sup> However, what it “cannot reveal to us is the power that emanates from his entire person when he is in action. One *sees* his music.”<sup>68</sup> The physicality of Garner’s playing was especially useful for his sidemen, who relied on his visual cues. Drummer Kelly Martin recalled, “Everything he does you can mostly tell by the expression on his face.”<sup>69</sup> Shadow Wilson, who had played with Garner extensively in the early 1950s and occasionally called Martin as a substitute, advised him to “keep your eyes on this guy ‘cause if you take your eyes off him, he’ll turn left ‘cause he’s thinking every minute.”<sup>70</sup> The combined visual, aural and emotional elements of Garner’s playing had not, to this point, been as accessible to European audiences; the live performances would help familiarize them with a more complete representation of his artistry.

The popularity of radio broadcasting as a means for those Atlantic intermediaries to disseminate jazz culture also cannot be underestimated. Even French film theorist, André Bazin, who saw “drawbacks” to radio compared to television, insisted in the 1950s that “anyone with even the slightest bit of artistic or intellectual curiosity will find himself satisfied, indeed expanded, by what radio has to offer: thanks to it, we are steeped in culture.”<sup>71</sup> In an effort to

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<sup>67</sup> Moore, 195.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> Doran, 94.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

<sup>71</sup> André Bazin, *André Bazin’s New Media*, edited and trans. by Dudley Andrew (Oakland: University of California Press, 2014), 127.

position itself in a growing communications market, helped by the commercialization of the transistor radio, the French government established their first foreign network of channels in 1954 under the Ministry of Overseas France.<sup>72</sup> A prominent radio host, Sim Copan's broadcasts (*Negro Spirituals*, *L'Amérique et sa musique*, and *Panorama du jazz américain*) were bringing in over 3.5 million listeners per week.<sup>73</sup> His theme song for *Panorama*, a program on Paris Inter which would become the most popular radio station in France, was Duke Ellington's "Metronome All Out."<sup>74</sup> *Panorama* was disseminated during the heaviest tuned-in hours, which allowed the opportunity for wide-scale distribution among the post-war generation.<sup>75</sup> American-born and fluent French speaker, Copans was a trusted intermediary who sought to remove the "snobbism" from jazz culture, educating the public about jazz history with particular focus on New Orleans and Chicago.<sup>76</sup> Realizing that the French audience possessed "a kind of seriousness, love, [and] passion for jazz," he invited French musicians and critics to be guests on his show.<sup>77</sup> When, in 1948, he opened the discourse to "regular" young listeners, Copans inadvertently encouraged yet another generation of jazz critics to evolve - among them, future musicologists and critic André Clergeat.<sup>78</sup> Of the letters from listeners that Copans received between 1957 and 1959, only one-fifth were from within the Paris metropole, suggesting a

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<sup>72</sup> Moore, 303-304.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid, 297-298.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid, 281.

<sup>75</sup> Suddarth, 34.

<sup>76</sup> Moore, 293-301.

<sup>77</sup> Suddarth, 35.

<sup>78</sup> Moore, 293.

majority listenership in other countries or outside the city.<sup>79</sup> Furthermore, about one-third of the fan-mail came from females - a statistic not represented by the male-dominated world of jazz critics at that time.<sup>80</sup> As in the United States during the 1950s, radio was a welcomed opportunity to bring women into the broader discussions of social accessibility and economic agency.<sup>81</sup> Although jazz had historically interested “an elite and minority portion” of French audiences who considered jazz to be “high art,”<sup>82</sup> the 1950s brought new fans to jazz, including middle-class and low-income consumers.<sup>83</sup> In 1959, over 50% of readers of *Jazz Magazine* were between the ages of 15 and 20, including many university students.<sup>84</sup> The owners of the publication, who had purchased it from the prominent Barclay record label in 1955 for a “quasi-symbolic sum,” ran advertisements, free of charge, for Barclay.<sup>85</sup> Considering the powerful alliances between jazz intermediaries, for example the print medium of *Jazz Magazine* and distribution networks of Barclay, what bargaining power was left for the artist?

In November 1957, weeks before Garner’s Paris debut, the French magazine *Jazz Hot* ran a review of a newly-released, Philips-distributed record called *Erroll Garner: Sur Scène*. The full-page article was titled “Le Pour et le Contre” (“For and Against”) and displayed two semi-opposing views of the album. While agreeing that Garner was appreciated by traditionalists and

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<sup>79</sup> Ibid, 302.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

<sup>81</sup> Jennifer Hyland Wang, “The Case of the Radio-Active Housewife: Relocating Radio in the Age of Television,” in *Radio Reader: Essays in the Cultural History of Radio*, ed. Michele Hilmes and Jason Loviglio (London: Routledge, 2002), 343.

<sup>82</sup> Suddarth, 2.

<sup>83</sup> Moore, 276.

<sup>84</sup> Suddarth, 19.

<sup>85</sup> Moore, 205.

“evolutionists” alike, thirty-year-old André Clergeat clearly sought to remove himself from either of those factions.<sup>86</sup> Describing a “certain tiredness” that “reduces almost any surprise effect,” Clergeat was unabashedly critical of Garner’s “pompous” and “unbearable” playing, especially during slow tempo pieces. He begins by declaring “there’s nothing new to say about Erroll Garner since André Hodeir did in November 1947.” He ended by assuring readers that “I know people - musicians, amateurs, critics who can’t stand listening to Erroll Garner’s piano playing for long.” Kurt Mohr, who wrote the supposed counter-opinion, only assured readers that “his music is misjudged” and that Garner defies classification as “old” or “modern.” Although a “tempting” purchase, Mohr advises that “for those who already have a good collection of Garner, [this one] is not necessary and will not bring anything new.”<sup>87</sup> The comments are surprising, considering the tracks were identical to the Columbia version in America, *Concert by the Sea*, the “No. 1 on the Top Jazz Album Chart for 1957.”<sup>88</sup>

In *Art Worlds*, Becker posits that an “art world” is born once a network is established and the grid of influencers convinces the public that “what is being done is art, and deserves the rights and privileges associated with that status.”<sup>89</sup> The stipulation, he adds, is that at any time, “certain ways of displaying work connote ‘art,’ while others do not.”<sup>90</sup> It is the art world, itself, which draws the confines of what is considered to be “acceptable art.”<sup>91</sup> Members are initiated or

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<sup>86</sup> André Clergeat and Kurt Mohr, “Erroll Garner, Sur Scène: Le Pour et Le Contre,” *Jazz Hot*, 1957, No. 126, 36, translation by the author and Nathalie Minetti.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid.

<sup>88</sup> Burt Korall, “Jazz Speaks Many Tongues, Vaults National Barriers,” *The Billboard*, 19 August 1957.

<sup>89</sup> Becker, 339.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid.

<sup>91</sup> Becker, 226.

rejected based on their ability to recognize or produce what is defined as such.<sup>92</sup> While critics like Clergeat were entitled to display their direct judgements in jazz publications, records companies could be more subtle in their tactics by cataloging artists into different sub-genres. A 1949 French catalogue separated jazz under four categories: “dance” (mostly French musicians), “Hot Jazz” (Erroll Garner, Rex Stewart, Don Byas, Django Reinhardt, and Tyree Gless), “New-Orléans” (Baby Dodds, Kid Ory), and “be-bop” (Charlie Parker, Dizzy Gillespie, Dexter Gordon, Bill Harris, and Howard McGhee).<sup>93</sup> There was a larger market for Dixieland and traditional New Orleans music in 1950s France, due to the popularity of Sidney Bechet and the fact that bebop was not considered to be dance music.<sup>94</sup> Amplified by the amount of American artists who, during the late 1950s, called Paris “home,” including Kenny Clarke, Bud Powell, Jimmy Gourley, Don Byas, and Mezz Mezzrow, the jazz critics had an ample supply of personalities and live performances to draw upon.<sup>95</sup> A 1986 study is telling of the fluidity of Garner's playing style, as well as his marker in the art world. The results showed that 18% of jazz programming remained dedicated to a category titled “1940s and 1950s e.g.; Lester Young, Erroll Garner and bebop.” Thirty-four percent of programming covered “classic jazz: New Orleans style through swing,” while the majority air time of 47% disseminated “modern jazz: West Coast, cool and free jazz.”<sup>96</sup> Therefore, Garner’s status under the classification of “Hot Jazz” in 1949 had, at some point, shifted to the bracket that included “bebop” musicians. Interestingly, only he and Lester

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<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

<sup>93</sup> Moore, 177.

<sup>94</sup> Suddarth, 19.

<sup>95</sup> Suddarth, 14.

<sup>96</sup> Suddarth, 20.



Young were listed as separate entities in the 1986 study, assuming that they defied being categorized.

#### 4.

#### “PARIS BLUES”: GARNER IN PARIS

Part of Martha Glaser’s managing strategy was to relay concert attendance results and positive reactions about Garner to media outlets. This required forthright and immediate communication from someone on-sight to call or send a cable with those details. That is why, on December 6, 1957, she sent a pointed message from New York to Garner’s road manager in Paris, Al Avakian (younger brother of George Avakian, executive at Columbia Records), expressing that she was “utterly bewildered and discouraged by your failure to cable opening day results as per agreement. Your goof cost me every deadline and break in town. Nice work. Am surprised. Alerted press for award presentation but you have let me down with information there too. I depended on you.”<sup>97</sup>

Unbeknownst to Glaser, what occurred in Paris on December 6, was probably dramatic enough that neither Garner nor Al Avakian had time to think about cabling home before addressing the situation at-hand. During their telephone call on Saturday, December 7, Avakian, Glaser, and Garner had tried to put the pieces together, to which Glaser summed up in a telegram to Goddard Lieberman, President of Columbia Records.

Dear Mr. Lieberman;

Urgently request early Monday morning appointment with you to try to undo considerable damage Phillips [sic] in Paris have inflicted on Errol[1] Garner in her first week there. Have described situation in detail to Nat Shapiro and

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<sup>97</sup> Martha Glaser to Al Avakian, 6 December 1957, Box 3, Folder 1, Correspondence 1957-1993, Errol Garner Archive, University of Pittsburgh Library.

Mitch. I am appalled at their negligent mishandling of Garner, particularly since he went abroad specifically after talking to Phillips [sic] people at Miami convention to suit their request. I am of the firm belief that there is more than negligence involved since I have just learned that Canneti [sic] of Phillips [sic] is involved openly with the Alhambra Theatre in Paris, and Garner is appearing at the rival Olympia Theatre. In early consultations with Nat Shapiro we decided that Phillips [sic] would have exclusive handling of Garner public relations in Paris, and had notified Olympia Theatre of same. Garner and Al Avakian, road manager for the tour, phone[d] from Paris Saturday morning advising me they have been cloaked in silence. Garner hurt professionally and his personality severely crushed. Desperately in need of your help immediately on this matter. Nat Shapiro and Debbie Ishlon have given us wonderful cooperation at this end. If Phillips' [sic] personnel have dual conflicting interests in Paris, then we want to withdraw Garner from their label. Thank you for your cooperation.

Kindly advise, Martha Glaser<sup>98</sup>

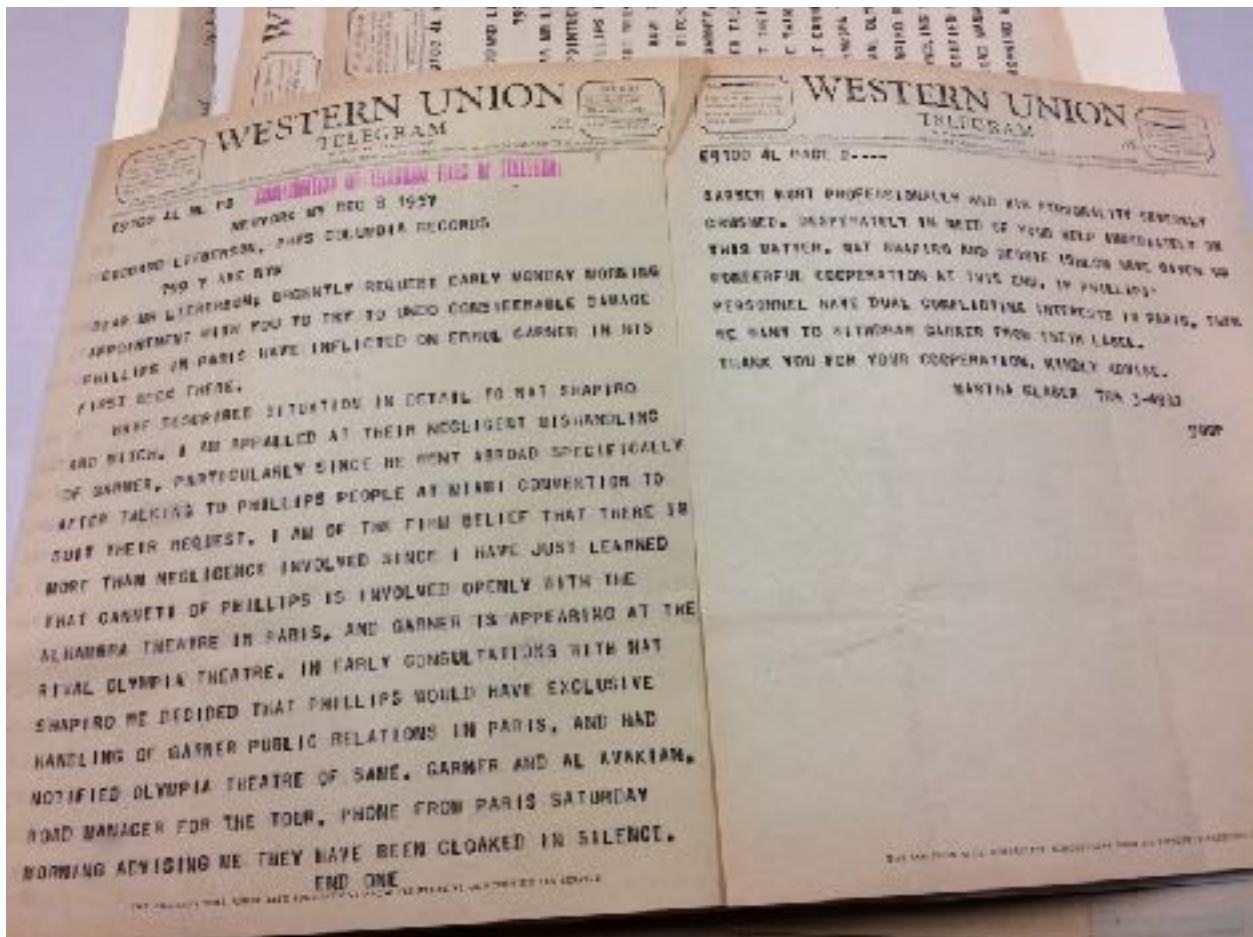


Figure 3. Telegram Martha Glaser to Goddard Lieberson

<sup>98</sup> Martha Glaser to Goddard Lieberson, 8 December 1957, Box 3, Folder 1.

Columbia, the company with whom Garner was contracted at the time, had an agreement with Philips Records in Europe regarding distribution and publicity.<sup>99</sup> So naturally, orders came from “top brass” at Columbia, like Nat Shapiro, to use Philips as the tour agent.<sup>100</sup> Philips, for whatever reason, had chosen the Olympia for Garner’s three-week run. However, Jacques Canetti from Philips’ Artists & Repertoire division was, according to Glaser’s message, “involved openly with the Alhambra Theatre in Paris,” a “rival” to the Olympia Theatre.<sup>101</sup> The “dual conflicting interests” to which Glaser might have been referring was the incentive for Philips to book Garner at the Alhambra-Maurice Chevalier (“Alhambra” for short). It is possible that a deal was struck behind closed doors between Canetti of Philips/Alhambra and Coquatrix of the Olympia to have Garner play concerts that would bring in money for the Alhambra or for Philips in some other capacity. Plus, Coquatrix may have secretly wanted to requite some of his financial loss that he felt Garner owed him for not agreeing to open two days earlier, on December 4. As George Avakian remembered the story in a 1993 interview, it was his younger brother, Al Avakian, who protected Garner in the event against Coquatrix:

Martha Glaser asked Al to go over with Erroll when Erroll made his first trip to Europe. It was basically to play at the Olympia theater in Paris, which was the place, like the Palace Theater in vaudeville in America. The man who ran the Olympia was a notoriously tough gangster type named - oh gosh. Bruno Coquatrix. Al had learned French perfectly when he was studying at the Sorbonne and hanging out with French musicians like Django Reinhardt and Bernard - well, so many.

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<sup>99</sup> “American Columbia Sign with Philips,” *Musical Express*, 14 December 1951, No. 258, 1.

<sup>100</sup> Martha Glaser to Goddard Lieberman, 8 December 1957, Box 3, Folder 1.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid.

On this occasion, after Erroll had played for a couple of days at the Olympia, Coquatrix called Al and Erroll into the office and said through a - he didn't speak English - said through an interpreter, 'Mr. Avakian, I guess you know about Erroll's concerts outside Paris, which he's also going to play for me.' I believe, as Al told me the story, it was to play without additional payment. The contract covered it. He didn't know that Al spoke French, because Al decided to play it cool, because he knew about Coquatrix's reputation, and he figured, I just better play the dumb American manager/friend/photographer, because his mission was also to photograph the tour, which he did. That's the *Paris Impressions* album, and a lot of unused photographs are in that box. My niece found them and gave them to me to go through, which I haven't done entirely. Coquatrix explained this through the interpreter.

Al said, 'I'd like to see the contract.' Coquatrix said sure, handing it to him, because he knows this guy doesn't speak French. Al glances quickly through it, takes a deep breath, and, as Erroll loves to tell the story, he let loose a blast, an absolute blast, of gutter French gangster slang such as Coquatrix couldn't imagine any American would know, but which Al knew. He laid Coquatrix out, called him everything in the book, including a cicatrix, which means a scar on the face of humanity. Coquatrix turned all colors, including pale, and admitted no, Erroll didn't have to play these concerts without getting paid extra.

I don't remember if Erroll played the concerts and got paid extra, or didn't play them. I think he didn't play them, because at this point Erroll didn't want to play them, and Al didn't want Erroll to play them. So that must have been the way it happened. But I don't remember exactly, to tell the truth. That was, I think, the thing that made Erroll feel that Al was his friend for life, because if Martha had been there, goodness knows what would have happened. She may have found out, but it couldn't have been handled in a way which would shut up Coquatrix for good. That's one thing that Erroll never, never forgot.<sup>102</sup>

George Avakian credits his brother for dismantling Coquatrix in French, but that does not explain why Glaser used the phrase "cloaked in silence" in her telegram to Lieberman. Al Avakian would have been able to communicate any discrepancies and speak on behalf of Garner. And why, as Glaser explained, was Garner "hurt professionally and his personality severely crushed?" One possible reason Garner might have felt sorry about the situation is if Coquatrix

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<sup>102</sup> George Avakian, interview by Ann Sneed, 28 September 1993. Database on-line. Available from The National Museum of American History. Smithsonian Jazz Oral History Program NEA Jazz Master (2010), transcript, Archives Center, National Museum of American History, 97-98. [http://amhistory.si.edu/jazz/Avakian-George/Avakian\\_George\\_Transcript.pdf](http://amhistory.si.edu/jazz/Avakian-George/Avakian_George_Transcript.pdf). Accessed 30 March, 2017.

<b>WESTERN UNION</b> <b>TELEGRAM</b> <small>W. U. TELEGRAMS, INC. NEW YORK</small>		<small>CONFIRMATION OF CABLE FILED BY PHONE</small> DATE: _____ TIME: _____ CABLE NO.: _____ CABLE NO.: _____	
NO. OF CL. OF C. _____ NO. OF CL. _____ NO. OF CL. OF C. _____ NO. OF CL. _____		NO. OF CL. OF C. _____ NO. OF CL. _____	
NEW YORK NY FEB 8 1957			
125 INTL (LT) SHEET 1			
LT AL AYAKIAN RITZ HOTEL PARIS (FRANCE) (VIA WU CABLES)			
PLEASE PHONE GENE MOSKOWITZ OF VARIETY AT DEEN 4944 THIS MORNING I HIRED HIM THROUGH ERNIE ANDERSON <sup>TO DO SPECIAL</sup> STOP WRITING YOU REGARDING OUR FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS WITH HIM STOP CONTACT HIM IMMEDIATELY TREAT HIM LIKE FRIEND SINCE HE IS NOT USUAL PRESS AGENT HE KNOWS EVERYONE IN SHOW BUSINESS IN PARIS AND CAN BE VERY HELPFUL STOP ASK ERNOLL PLEASE COOPERATE CLEAN SCHEDULES WITH MOSKOWITZ GET BROCHURES PHOTOS FROM PHILLIPS FOR HIM STOP WORK WITH HIM ON AWARDS LUNCHEON FOR PUBLICITY BREAK KEEP US ADVISED BY CABLE OF AWARD DETAILS			
SHEET 2			
IN ADVANCE IF POSSIBLE STOP LFTTER FOLLOWS WARMEST REGARDS MARTHA PS COLUMBIA TOP BRASS CHECKING PHILLIPS GOOD WILL ADVISE KEEP COOL AND SWINGING EVERYTHING WILL WORK OUT 837P			
TRAJ 4932 MARTHA GLASER 215 WEST 86 ST NYC MAIL COPY			

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Sunday, December 8, she had fired Philips and hired Gene Moskowitz of *Variety* magazine to seize control of the publicity aspect for, at least, the rest of the Paris portion of the tour.<sup>103</sup> With Columbia “top brass” cleaning up the aftermath of the Philips “goof,” Glaser could re-focus her energy on the rest of the tour.<sup>104</sup> In a telegram to Al Avakian, which she signs “the girl manager,” she reclaims her role as decision-maker on financial and scheduling matters:

DOMESTIC SERVICE		\$		WESTERN UNION TELEGRAM		INTERNATIONAL SERVICE	
TELEGRAM		\$				TELEPHONE	
DAY LETTER		E				NIGHT LETTER	
NIGHT LETTER						CABLE	
AD. REG. FE. OF P&C	FE. OF COLL.	CASH TO		CHARGE TO THE ACCOUNT OF		TAXES	

*Please allow messages subject to the above rates, which are subject to change without notice.*

55 INTL FR CONFIRMATION OF CABLE FILED BY PHONE

NEW YORK NY DEC 9 1957 1155A

AL AVAKIAN

RITZ HOTEL PARIS (FRANCE) (VIA WU CABLES)

DELIGHTED AT YOUR NEWS TELL ERROLL I WILL SET PRICE FOR THEATRE CONCERT  
HE SHOULD NOT I FEEL ITS WORTH AT LEAST 2500 DOLLARS LET ME SET THE MONEY  
REFER THEATRE TO ME TO ARRANGE CONCERT SEE PHILIPS FOR PHOTOS AND RECORDS  
AM CONTACTING TIME MUCH LUCK

THE GIRL MANAGER

MAIL COPY MARATHA GLASER 215 WEST 88 ST NEW YORK NY 886  
TPA7 4436

**Figure 5. Telegram “The Girl Manager” to Al Avakian**

<sup>103</sup> Martha Glaser to Al Avakian, 8 December 1957, Box 3, Folder 1, Correspondence 1957-1993, Erroll Garner Archive, University of Pittsburgh Library.

104 Ibid.

Delighted at your news. Tell Erroll I will set price for theatre concert. He should not. I feel it's worth at least 2500 dollars. Let me set the money. Refer theatre to me to arrange concert. See Philips for photos and records. A.M. contacting time.  
Much luck, The Girl Manager<sup>105</sup>

On December 10, Glaser sent out telegrams to at least 38 radio stations and publications announcing the Grand Prix du Disque award ceremony that took place earlier that day, the success of the engagement at the Olympia, and the upcoming concerts in Amsterdam and Brussels that were "already sold out."<sup>106</sup> It seemed as though the December 6 incident was behind them. However, in a letter from Garner to Glaser, the grief he was still experiencing abroad was made apparent. His letter left Paris on December 20 and was received at Glaser's New York City apartment sometime thereafter. It read:

Dear Martha,

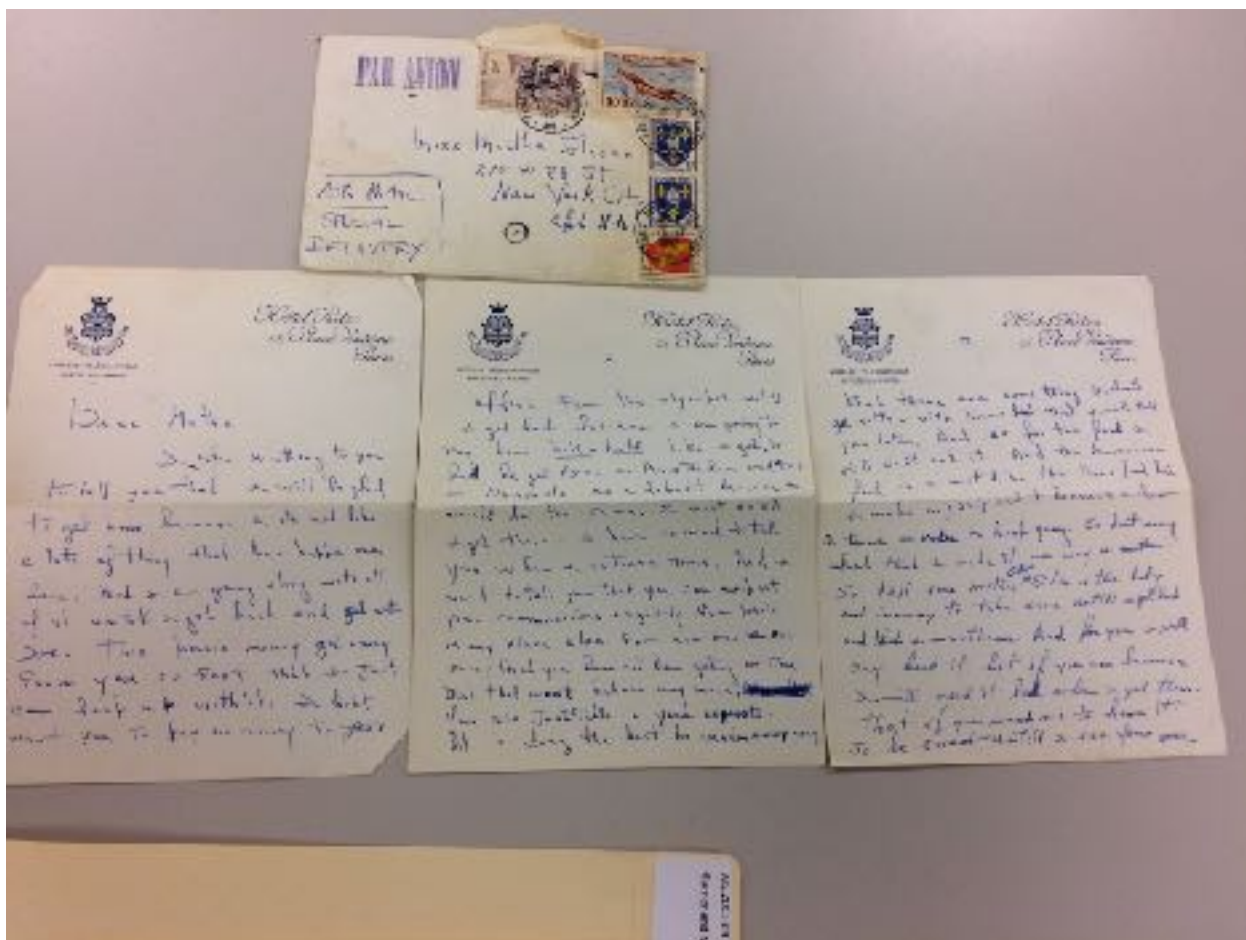
I am writing to you to tell you that I will be glad to get home because I do not like a lot of things that have happened over here. But I am going along with all of it until I get back and get with Joe. This Paris money got away from you so fast that I just can't keep up with it. I don't want you to pay no money to Joe's office from the Olympia until I get back because I am going to pay him half-and-half like I got. Too bad he got \$500 on Amsterdam and \$500 on Brussels as a deposit because I would do the same. So wait until I get there. I have so much to tell you when I return home. And I want to tell you that you can expect your commissions regularly from Paris or any place else from now on. Sorry that you have not been getting [them] on-time. But that won't happen any more. You are justifiable in your requests. Al is doing the best he can in every way. But there are some things I don't get with him. But that I will tell you later. And as for the food I still can't eat it. And the American food is almost like the Paris food but I make myself eat it because I know I have to in order to keep going. So don't worry about that. I'll make it one way or another. So tell you mother, father, and sister and the baby and Mamey to take care until I get back and that I miss them. And

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<sup>105</sup> Martha Glaser to Al Avakian, 9 December 1957, Box 3, Folder 1, Correspondence 1957-1993, Erroll Garner Archive, University of Pittsburgh Library.

<sup>106</sup> Martha Glaser to radio stations, 9 December 1957, Box 3, Folder 1, Correspondence 1957-1993, Erroll Garner Archive, University of Pittsburgh Library. Martha Glaser to Sam Elber, 9 December 1957, Box 3, Folder 2, Correspondence 1957-1993, Erroll Garner Archive, University of Pittsburgh Library.





**Figure 6. Letter Erroll Garner to Martha Glaser**

for you I will say keep it hot if you can because I will need it bad when I get there. That is if you want me to have it. So be sweet until I see you. So sorry I still can't write good but maybe someday I will be able to. So until later and I don't mean that late. Erroll, your Boss man, ok Boss lady, me & you, I help.<sup>107</sup>

There is a significant amount of material within his letter that deserves careful attention. It is the only correspondence retrieved that provides his uninhibited reaction to this trip. It is obvious that he feels at fault for past financial burdens that have affected the professional rapport between him and Glaser. He puts no blame on her, instead, projecting his frustration on to Joe Glaser. As his booking manager, Joe Glaser would have communicated directly with Philips.

<sup>107</sup> Erroll Garner to Martha Glaser, 20 December 1957, Box 3, Folder 5, Correspondence 1957-1993, Erroll Garner Archive, University of Pittsburgh Library.

Considering his experience in the business, Joe Glaser may have been negligent in warning Garner about schemes Philips might play. Just as Coquatrix was known for being a “ganster-type,” Joe Glaser was notorious for his alleged connections to organized crime in Boston and for being a “loud-talking tough guy from Chicago.”<sup>108</sup> He knew well enough to secure his 50% deposits for Amsterdam and Brussels because he might have suspected that Coquatrix would try to wrangle them out of profit.

Contrary to George Avakian's view that Garner considered Al Avakian a “friend for life,” Garner hints that they did not get on well. Having studied there and being fluent in the language, Al Avakian probably felt more comfortable than Garner did in Paris. With his “friend” status and “mission to photograph the tour,” as George Avakian states, Al Avakian probably was not the type of road manager Garner was used to. Maybe Avakian was too lax about his responsibilities or not concerned enough with Garner’s well-being in a foreign country. (Oddly, Garner does not mention Kelly Martin or Eddie Calhoun, which would have been familiar company, at least.) Garner does not use expressive or emotional diction, yet his sense of anguish and urgency is apparent. All the details and factors that contributed to the source of his discomfort cannot be known. However, he felt that he was treated unfairly by a number of people, external from the world which existed between him and Martha Glaser.

Uncovering possible motives of those outside forces requires analyzing his situation from a broad scope of the art world at that time. Becker argues that the voices of art worlds do not speak of artists as being interchangeable because it would jeopardize their very existence as judges of that art. As such, a ranking system that distinguishes musicians worth caring about

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<sup>108</sup> Teachout, 364.

from unimportant musicians is one way that critics maintain their status as knowledgeable and credible sources.<sup>109</sup> There are multiple ways through which the ranking system can play out. A blatant example is to pit one musician against another musician, which is exactly what Garner faced in the French press.

Miles Davis, who had played a sold-out concert at the Olympia on November 30, a week before Garner was to debut there, had apparently shocked some of the Parisian audience with his seemingly casual behavior. Davis later recalled, “there was only one critic who understood what I was doing and didn’t come down hard on me and that was André Hodeir, who I thought was one of the best music critics I had come across.”<sup>110</sup> It seems that 37-year-old André Hodeir had earned the right, at least among the French critics, to give the last word on the recent visits of Davis and Garner. In a January 1958 article in *Jazz Hot* titled “Davis et Garner à l’Olympia,” Hodeir uses the occasion of their consecutive Olympia engagements to represent “the extreme diversity of the jazz world,” although he makes his preference of Davis quite clear.<sup>111</sup> “One of the finest jazz concerts we have ever heard in Paris,” Davis’s performance was an example of his ability to reinvent himself, while still maintaining swing, “in the traditional sense of the term.”<sup>112</sup> Hodeir responds to the public’s “shock” of Davis’s “casualness on stage” - cutting short the applause and stringing one song after the next - explaining that Davis is, in fact, “restoring the

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<sup>109</sup> Becker, 231.

<sup>110</sup> Miles Davis and Quincy Troupe, *Miles: The Autobiography* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1989), 208.

<sup>111</sup> André Hodeir, “Davis et Garner à l’Olympia,” *Jazz Hot*, January 1958, 31-32, translation by the author and Nathalie Minetti.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid.

public their dignity,” via the song selection, the “sobriety of codas,” and his well-dressed appearance.<sup>113</sup>

While positioning himself as a lone defender of Davis, Hodeir aligns himself as a sympathetic ally to the French audience when speaking about Garner. Hodeir compares Garner’s performance to a chase between “cat” and “mouse,” wherein Garner teases the listeners with long, ambiguous introductions before finally “rewarding” the public and “revealing” the ensuing selection.<sup>114</sup> While this may work for American audiences, Hodeir continued, this game of back-and-forth was not as familiar to Parisians. In his opinion, Garner was unable to attain an “admirable purity,” even though the “vitality” and “enthusiasm” of his “swing quality” makes him “accessible.”<sup>115</sup>

The “admirable purity,” in fact, was bestowed upon Miles Davis’s playing - Hodeir called it “l’admirable pureté davisienne.”<sup>116</sup> The article concludes by separating Davis from the older generation of musicians and, at the same time, by Hodeir distancing himself from other critics. “One of our colleagues recently praised Earl Hines for his grimaces [sic]. Miles Davis, fortunately, has stronger assets in his playing than that.”<sup>117</sup>

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<sup>113</sup> Ibid.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid.

## 5. “EVERY PIANIST NEEDS A GIMMICK”: RETURN HOME

The standards of art worlds, like the one that helped fuel André Hodeir’s comments, change overtime. The language that is used to separate superior artists from mediocrity, the “judgement of history,” evolves as new generations are integrated into the art world.<sup>118</sup> In 1958, the British magazine *Jazz Monthly* wrote: “Erroll at the piano is a study in introspection, he shakes his head, haunches his shoulders, while his lips move in a private conversation, grinning, grimacing and grunting, he showers thundering chords into the melody - like a Jove of the keyboard.”<sup>119</sup> Either there was a disconnect amongst jazz writers regarding the meaning of “grimacing,” or Hodeir was attempting to codify the word to mean something different than it had in the past. Maybe he was hoping that his contentious remarks might fuel debate within the community. Publications often served as a way for critics to work out their differences. For example, in the “moldy fig” debate in the 1930s, “revivalists” and “modernists” of jazz used print media, like *Metronome* and *Down Beat* magazines, to claim territory in the art world.<sup>120</sup>

As this particular British critic from *Jazz Monthly*, James Roddan, admitted, the general public in England was still unfamiliar with Garner, mainly because he defied category.<sup>121</sup> As

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<sup>118</sup> Becker, 231.

<sup>119</sup> Roddan, 6.

<sup>120</sup> Bernard Gendron, “‘Moldy Figs’ and Modernists: Jazz at War (1942-1946),” in *Jazz Among the Discourses*, ed. Krin Gabbard (Durham: Duke University Press, 1995), 33.

<sup>121</sup> Roddan, 6.

proof from the mere twenty-four hours Garner spent with the British press during his tour, they were, nonetheless, eager to express their praise of him to their audiences:

Garner has successfully pioneered his own individual trail. He is akin to the other supreme innovators of personal style, Armstrong, Lester Young, Hawkins, Monk, Parker, Hampton, etc. His imitators fall very short of him, and invariably sink into mediocre obscurity - although some of the so called 'greats' have not hesitated to borrow prolifically from Erroll's style. Others may copy - but never successfully, his very personal designs on the framework of jazz.<sup>122</sup>

Roddan quoted Mary Lou Williams as saying that Garner was “the Billie Holiday of the piano;” and for Woody Herman, who recorded *Music For Tired Lovers* with him in 1954, Garner was an obvious “source of inspiration.”<sup>123</sup> When asked about his inability to read, Garner responded, “I just never learned and now the professors in France tell me I should stay the way I am.”<sup>124</sup> At the Prix du Disque ceremony, Garner had met French composers Darius Milhaud and Guy Béart, who may have been impressed by the fact that he did not read music.<sup>125</sup> Therefore, his acknowledging the French “professors” could have been a way to exclude the more hostile voices of French jazz critics. Although, it might have also been an attempt for Garner to diminish the importance of those dissenting opinions. Al Hall, who played bass with him intermittently between 1945 and 1963 said:

When we were working and playing together then, we weren't involved with critics' opinions and who was great or who wasn't. We played to enjoy ourselves. Then, we did it out of love, compassion, and appreciation for one another's talent. We didn't put it in a box and tie a ribbon around it just to find out what it was.

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<sup>122</sup> Roddan, 6.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid.

<sup>125</sup> Garner, Erroll. *Paris Impressions*. Columbia Records. 1958. C2L9. Vinyl.

You had the critics that became Ph.D.'s from college trying to analyze what was already done.<sup>126</sup>

Roddan's article was not the only positive press that came out of England. The *Melody Maker*'s album review on December 7, 1957 of *The Garner Touch* LP, the British counterpart to the North American-issued *Erroll Garner - Gems*, was more favorable than not. Although the recordings were from 1950, '51, and '53, the article still was nothing near the scrutiny that *Erroll Garner: Sur Scène* (i.e. *Concert By The Sea*) received from the French *Jazz Hot* article only a month earlier. The British magazine assured that, while not "his most exciting set," it was still "near enough of Garner at his best to prove how right the 'Down Beat' readers were when they voted him, in the 1956 poll, the greatest living jazz pianist - a distinction he only just missed in the recent MM readers' and critics' polls, in both of which he came second."<sup>127</sup>

In the December 21 issue, Henry Kahn, Paris correspondent for *Melody Maker*, described his anticipated encounter with Garner during the residency at the Olympia. Kahn wrote, "Erroll thinks every solo pianist has to have a gimmick. 'Fats had a gimmick, Teddy Wilson has a gimmick. They all have gimmicks. My gimmick is to start as a kind of stranger to my audience and end up a very familiar friend. That is the way I like to play jazz.'"<sup>128</sup> If an artist must disassociate their work from posers and commercialized copyists in order to be accepted into an art world, was Garner dismissing himself willingly from the constructed art world by his use of the word "gimmick?"<sup>129</sup> On the other hand, since artists who desire to be elevated to membership

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<sup>126</sup> Doran, 79.

<sup>127</sup> Leonard Feather, "America Calling: Garner on his way," *Melody Maker*, 7 December 1957, 2.

<sup>128</sup> Henry Kahn, "Erroll Garner Says - Every Pianist Needs a Gimmick," *Melody Maker*.

<sup>129</sup> Becker, 339.

of an art world try to associate their work with masters of their craft, should Garner's mentioning of Fats Waller and Teddy Wilson be interpreted as a yearning for acceptance?<sup>130</sup> In any case, "gimmick" probably was not how Miles Davis was describing his own strategies at that time, as Hodeir's praise of "l'admirable pureté davisienne" seems antithetical to a commercialized product. Here, it is useful to turn to the personal correspondence between Garner and Martha Glaser to try to decipher how the term "gimmick" entered into the discourse of his strategy.

As it relates to Garner's 1956-1958 creative output, the term "gimmick" can be traced back to Mitch Miller's involvement in *Other Voices* (1957) and *Paris Impressions* (1958). Miller, an Artists & Repertoire figure at Columbia, would have met occasionally with Glaser and Garner to discuss topics ranging from sales conventions to Garner's publishing firm, Octave Music, which was established in February 1956.<sup>131</sup> On March 14, 1956, Glaser wrote:

I wish I had the know-how to help you get a 'hit' - I can only hope that I can help you produce your best - for I feel that that is your true 'hit' and 'star' quality - what you have to say, musically, the whole world will catch up to soon, and that is how you will hit. Mitch may figure out a gimmick hit, but basically, the public has to 'hit' your music, and not vice versa. I hope I am not being too confusing.<sup>132</sup>

The "gimmick hit" to which Glaser was referring may have been Miller's idea to do an album with Garner and full orchestral accompaniment. In a set of three sessions in September 1956 and May 1957, Garner recorded ten tracks with Miller's Orchestra. With arrangements by Nat Pierce and Miller assuming the role of conductor, Garner was featured on *Other Voices*,

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<sup>130</sup> Ibid.

<sup>131</sup> Martha Glaser to Erroll Garner, 7 February 1956, Box 3, Folder 2, Correspondence 1957-1993, Erroll Garner Archive, University of Pittsburgh Library.

<sup>132</sup> Martha Glaser to Erroll Garner, 14 March 1956, Box 3, Folder 2.



which was released by Columbia in 1957. Gordon “Specs” Powell, the drummer on the sessions, confirmed that Garner seemed “slightly uncomfortable” with the orchestra because “he was boxed into the arrangements. But in those days they started to put strings behind Charlie Parker and a number of people so they could ‘clean up’ jazz and make it into a pop commodity.”<sup>133</sup>

Although the word “gimmick” may have come up in conversations between them, Glaser considered Garner’s artistry to be on a high level - he was “the only great concert soloist in jazz” - reason to believe she would have never seriously associated his work with the term “gimmick.”<sup>134</sup> In her letter to him on May 21, 1957, she states,

Today you asked me to tell you about the “gimmick” I had in mind. To say that I was surprised is putting it mildly. I have not planned your career and sweated out the slow moves according to “gimmicks.” If I want to sell gimmicks, I’ll sell soap. And that you think of yourself in these terms after all these years is pretty baffling to me.<sup>135</sup>

Whether or not she approved of Garner’s own use of the term “gimmick” through public interviews, such as the one with *Melody Maker*’s Harry Kahn, is not certain. However, Kahn did make an interesting observation in the article in relation to the sound of Garner’s playing: “His touch is superb. He uses the piano as if it were a harp with keys.”<sup>136</sup> Considering that Miller had been asking for months whether Garner would record on harpsichord, Kahn’s comments provide

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<sup>133</sup> Doran, 80-81.

<sup>134</sup> Martha Glaser to Erroll Garner, 9 November 1956, Box 3, Folder 2.

<sup>135</sup> Martha Glaser to Erroll Garner, 21 May 1957, Box 3, Folder 2, Correspondence 1957-1993, Erroll Garner Archive, University of Pittsburgh Library.

<sup>136</sup> Henry Kahn, 3.

a likely-coincidental foreshadowing, and possible reassurance of Garner's eventual conceding to Miller's concept, for *Paris Impressions*.<sup>137</sup>

The two months following Garner's return home proved difficult, as he and Glaser needed to work through pressing financial and business matters. He had not been wise about his spending habits, which had, over the years, diminished his earning potential. Had he been more careful in building a "solid foundation, instead of one of over-spending and extravagant waste," he would have had the resources to get a better deal on his European tour.<sup>138</sup> His disappointment regarding Europe did not go unnoticed by Glaser, who thought it necessary to supervise a TIME Magazine interview so that Garner's comments would not be read as "anti-[E]uropean."<sup>139</sup> She urged him to talk about:

Those pleasant experiences you did have...and reflect about the way your music was received — what else you'd like to do in music — whether long-hairs there came to hear you too — the bell ringing ceremony, the party in [E]ngland, the critics there and how kind they were — the food, hotel, climate — how you really want to spend [C]hristmas at home — how, at heart, you're basically and completely [A]merican and would rather stay home.<sup>140</sup>

The "long-hairs" to which Glaser referred were, at that time, the Western-classical music audience.<sup>141</sup> In 1957, Columbia controlled the market of "long-hair" concerts in the United

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<sup>137</sup> Martha Glaser to Erroll Garner, 10 September 1957, Box 3, Folder 2, Correspondence 1957-1993, Erroll Garner Archive, University of Pittsburgh Library.

<sup>138</sup> Martha Glaser to Erroll Garner, 9 January 1958, Box 3, Folder 9, Correspondence 1957-1993, Erroll Garner Archive, University of Pittsburgh Library.

<sup>139</sup> Martha Glaser to Erroll Garner, 16 January 1958, Box 3, Folder 9, Correspondence 1957-1993, Erroll Garner Archive, University of Pittsburgh Library.

<sup>140</sup> Ibid.

<sup>141</sup> Paul H Little, "'Long Hair' Music, Forgotten Art On Disc Parade, Critic Points Out," *The Chicago Defender*, 7 February 1953, 18.

States.<sup>142</sup> By supplying Garner with linguistic cues, she was hoping the interview would connect to Columbia's already-existing market - one that Garner may not have yet fully tapped into. TIME Magazine was, after all, "read by 30 million intellectual type of people throughout the world. it is THE paper."<sup>143</sup>

Glaser was also concerned with bringing his "cash-out-of-pocket spending into line," as Garner still owed \$5,000 on his new apartment.<sup>144</sup> She pleaded:

To date, we are still without essential help, secretarial, publicity, special projects - and, I can't swing the whole show alone, anymore. So work on you is being neglected beyond the point that I can handle it; and opportunities on you are lost daily. As for the 'creative output' which you said you'd start on next week (it's always 'next week', 'tomorrow', or 'later' for improvements, that is up to you.[])] I realize that the reality and truth of our situation may not always be pleasant, but it is necessary to know where we stand, unless we want to topple over. A top heavy building must have a foundation, or crumble. The answer is yours. But we MUST SAY AND DO, in line now. I can't continue to juggle your cash and living habits and your career, and make it come out even. Something WILL give. I hope it's not your prestige, career, and reputation.<sup>145</sup>

Garner's response to this matter seemed to be in trying to find ways to make more money, not ways in which he could cut his spending. He occasionally made overzealous deals, not to spite his manager, but possibly because he wanted to feel a sense of creative responsibility and entrepreneurial freedom. The distribution of work between them was set so that the art production was relegated to Garner and the administrative and public relations duties to Glaser. By naming their responsibilities, they were able to operate efficiently based on the merits of her

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<sup>142</sup> "Izzy Rowe's Notebook," *Pittsburgh Courier*, 30 November 1957, 43.

<sup>143</sup> Martha Glaser to Erroll Garner, 9 January 1958, Box 3, Folder 9.

<sup>144</sup> Martha Glaser to Erroll Garner, 3 February 1958, Box 3, Folder 9, Correspondence 1957-1993, Erroll Garner Archive, University of Pittsburgh Library.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid.

business savvy and his talent, even as they struggled with outside influences and obstacles. When Garner overstepped his role, Glaser let him know that his “loose” and “casual” approach to detailed business practices were unwelcome; she would remind him to “quit creating new problems... YOU TAKE CARE OF THE MUSIC.”<sup>146</sup> Art worlds are dependent on the “cooperative links” and the “extensive division of labor” between the artist and the personnel who support them.<sup>147</sup> Yet, is it fair to expect that the artist will never crave the personal fulfillment that securing a performance might produce? Does there not exist a certain satisfaction in seeing a business opportunity through, from planning to distribution? Part of the re-negotiation process that Garner and Glaser continuously revisited throughout their relationship dealt with learning to respect each other’s personal limitations and boundaries within the cooperative system.

By March, Glaser seemed to cede some power to Garner on a few business matters, even though she was still heavily involved in the process. Garner decided to decline an invitation for a gathering with the President of Philips, possibly because he wanted to show his disapproval for how they treated him in Paris. He also chose to split from Joe Glaser at Associated Booking, acquiring Sol Hurok as his new booking agent. He was considering possibilities of some projects with the Hollywood-based William Morris Agency. Whether or not he thought it a “gimmick,” his musical creativity was fueled by his and Glaser’s shared idea of a new “[F]rench-type thing.”<sup>148</sup> A clever way to turn negative feelings toward his European tour into something

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<sup>146</sup> Martha Glaser to Erroll Garner, 24 February 1958, Box 3, Folder 9, Correspondence 1957-1993, Erroll Garner Archive, University of Pittsburgh Library.

<sup>147</sup> Becker, 13, 25, 70.

<sup>148</sup> Martha Glaser to Erroll Garner, 4 March 1958, Box 3, Folder 9, Correspondence 1957-1993, Erroll Garner Archive, University of Pittsburgh Library.

positive would be to release a stellar album dedicated to the experience. After having suggested possible tunes that Garner could cover, Glaser added in a letter, “many of the tunes kill me and are crying for your fabulous treatment...[I] mean that...those [F]rench have a lot of soul.”<sup>149</sup>

Garner recorded the tracks for *Paris Impressions* in two sessions, March 27 and May 11, 1958.<sup>150</sup> Accompanied by Calhoun on bass and Martin on drums, Garner played harpsichord on four original pieces - “When Paris Cries”, “Don’t Look For Me”, “Paris Blues”, and “Cote D’Azur.” The other Garner compositions which featured him on piano were “Farewell to Paris”, “French Doll”, “The French Touch”, “La Petite Mambo”, “Left Bank Swing”, “Moroccan Quarter”, “Paris Bounce” and “Paris Midnight.”<sup>151</sup> (“Left Bank Swing” is a version of “Groovy Day” that he first recorded in 1953.)<sup>152</sup> The covers included “I Love Paris” (Cole Porter), “Le Vie en Rose” (Edith Piaf and Louiguy Monnot), “The Last Time I Saw Paris” (Jerome Kern and Oscar Hammerstein II), “Louise” (Richard A. Whiting and Leo Robin), “My Man” (Jacques Charles, Channing Pollock, Albert Willemetz, and Maurice Yvain - its original title was “Mon Homme”), and “The Song from Moulin Rouge (Where Is Your Heart)” (Georges Auric and William Engvick) - the theme from the 1952 movie, *Moulin Rouge*, which was a Billboard hit by

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<sup>149</sup> Martha Glaser to Erroll Garner, 22 February 1958, Box 3, Folder 9, Correspondence 1957-1993, Erroll Garner Archive, University of Pittsburgh Library. Martha Glaser to Erroll Garner, 4 March 1958, Box 3, Folder 9.

<sup>150</sup> Tom Lord, “Jazz Discography,” *Erroll Garner: Paris Impressions*, Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh, on-line, <http://www.carnegielibrary.org>, accessed 29 March 2017.

<sup>151</sup> Discogs, *Erroll Garner: Paris Impressions*, on-line, <https://www.discogs.com/Erroll-Garner-Paris-Im-pressions/release/2502830>, accessed 10 April 2017.

<sup>152</sup> Tom Lord.

Columbia recording artist Percy Faith in 1953.<sup>153</sup> Garner had appeared with Faith on a radio show on January 26, 1958, which could have influenced Glaser in suggesting the song.<sup>154</sup>

Garner was able to meet Glaser's request that she had outlined in her February 22 letter, which had recommended he compose four tunes with different styles: a blues, a ballad "suggesting paris", a "can-can dance," and an "apache dance," which, for these purposes was "really a tango."<sup>155</sup> On the March 27 session, he recorded a blues ("La Petite Mambo") with a slow calypso pulse, two ballads ("Farewell To Paris" and "Paris Midnight"), and a song that could resemble "can-can" music ("French Doll"). When Garner returned to the studio on May 11, he recorded two tracks which have qualities of the final requested style - "an apache dance" (or "tango") - which were titled "When Paris Cries" and "Cote D'Azur."<sup>156</sup> (He also recorded a version of "French Doll" on the May 11 date; but instead of playing it on piano, he played it on harpsichord. It was titled "Just blues" and was released by Columbia on a 7-inch 45 rpm.)<sup>157</sup> All of his originals, with the exception of "Paris Blues" - a 32-bar (AABA) tune with a simple harmonic progression and rock-and-roll rhythmic features - were recorded at the first session. "The French Touch" (slow shuffle), "Left Bank Swing" (medium swing), and "Paris Bounce" (medium shuffle) are all 32-bar songs in AABA form; "Moroccan Quarter" is an interesting 16-measure composition with a double-time feel.

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<sup>153</sup> Ibid. Frank Alkyer, *DownBeat - The Great Jazz Interviews: A 75th Anniversary Anthology* (Milwaukee: Hal Leonard, 2009), 195. Discogs, *Erroll Garner: Paris Impressions*, <https://www.discogs.com/Erroll-Garner-Paris-Impressions/release/2502830>.

<sup>154</sup> Martha Glaser to Erroll Garner, 9 January 1958, Box 3, Folder 9.

<sup>155</sup> Martha Glaser to Erroll Garner, 22 February 1958, Box 3, Folder 9.

<sup>156</sup> Erroll Garner, *Paris Impressions*, © 1958 by Columbia Records, C2L9, Vinyl.

<sup>157</sup> Tom Lord.

June was a slow performance month for Garner, which gave him time to do some administrative work regarding the new album. He had to transcribe the melody lines of the original compositions in order for them to be put under copyright protection, and he needed to decide where each track should be cut. Some of Glaser's instructions to him included:

Listen to them closely. [O]ne has the cut-off with [M]itch's voice...tell where you want it cut and started, and call [C]al [L]ampley about this; if [C]al out, ask for [T]ony [P]iano... (new right hand man to [M]itch) who is a pianist, an [A] and [R] man, and knows music. [G]et them to cut where you want also, watch for a momentary change in levels in one of them. [I] [a]m sure you can hear it better on your equipment.<sup>158</sup>

Garner also had to ask Miller and Cal Lampley for the master acetates so that he could take a closer listen before the albums were sent to production. Furthermore, Glaser wanted Garner to pressure them to re-master his solo piano album from 1957, *Soliloquy*. Not only did she think the sound quality to be subpar, but *Soliloquy* had not sold well. It was a missed financial opportunity, especially since Garner's publishing firm owned half of the songs on it and would have received significant royalties. After all, a re-release with better sound quality and, what Glaser referred to as the "Garner-Glaser" "promotional campaign", could piggyback nicely off of *Paris Impressions*.<sup>159</sup> Maybe they were optimistic that if *Paris Impressions* was successful, the unpleasantries of Europe might not have been experienced in vain. Committed to not let this opportunity slip by like *Soliloquy* had, she nudged him: "hope we two do a better job on [P]aris album...what say?"<sup>160</sup>

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<sup>158</sup> Martha Glaser to Erroll Garner, 29 May 1958, Box 3, Folder 9, Correspondence 1957-1993, Erroll Garner Archive, University of Pittsburgh Library.

<sup>159</sup> Martha Glaser to Erroll Garner, 14 June 1958, Box 3, Folder 9, Correspondence 1957-1993, Erroll Garner Archive, University of Pittsburgh Library.

<sup>160</sup> Ibid.

The first issue of *Paris Impressions* was released by Columbia in the summer of 1958 as a double-disc LP, wherein two discs were packaged in the same album cover.<sup>161</sup> To celebrate, Garner played the French Lick festival in Indiana on August 15, 1958; his was the act before Duke Ellington's on opening day.<sup>162</sup> Glaser also hired a "good publicity firm" to help push the album in the surrounding areas including Cincinnati, Louisville and Indianapolis.<sup>163</sup>

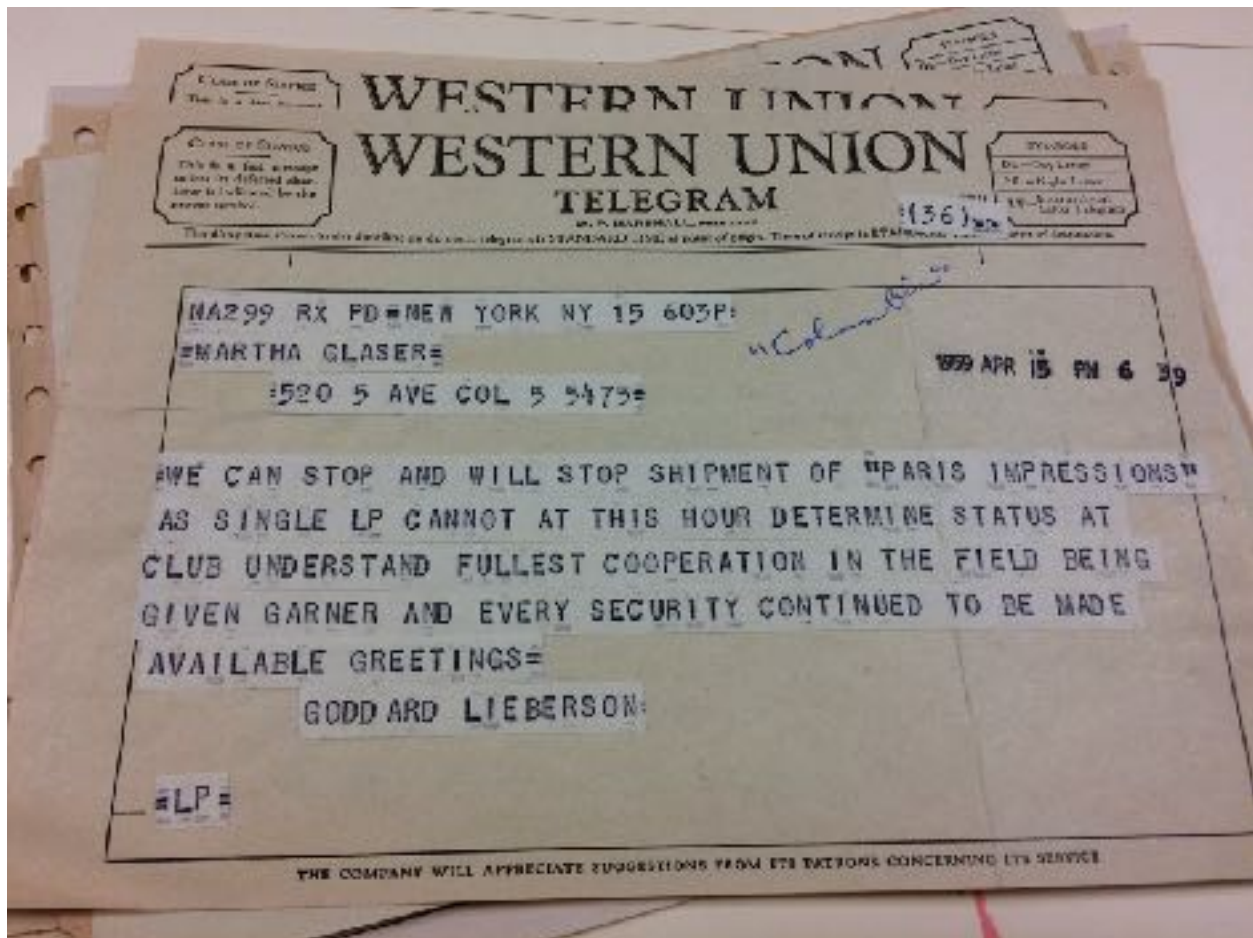


Figure 7. Telegram Goddard Lieberman to Martha Glaser

<sup>161</sup> "All That Jazz," *The Cash Box*, 22 October 1960, 22/6, 34.

<sup>162</sup> Ken Vail, *Duke's Diary, Part 2: The Life of Duke Ellington, 1950-1974* (Lanham: Scarecrow Press, 2002), 125.

<sup>163</sup> Martha Glaser to Erroll Garner, 25 July 1958, Box 3, Folder 9, Correspondence 1957-1993, Erroll Garner Archive, University of Pittsburgh Library.



There must have also been a single-disc LP that was scheduled to be distributed in 1959, as there is proof that such a plan was halted. A telegram was sent from Goddard Lieberman, then President of Columbia Records, to Glaser on April 15, 1959. In it, he stated, “We can stop and will stop shipment of “Paris Impressions” as single LP. Cannot at this hour determine status at club. Understand fullest cooperation in the field being given Garner and every security continued to be made available.”<sup>164</sup> It is unclear whether the other situations that Lieberman mentioned were related to the album’s issuance. One month later, however, two separately-packaged LPs of *Paris Impressions* were released as Volumes I and II.<sup>165</sup>

Possibly a decision driven by Glaser, the cancellation of a single LP begs further questions as to why it was initiated in the first place and whom its dissemination would have served. Columbia may have wanted to drive down the cost of *Paris Impressions* by offering a condensed, one-disc version. This would have meant that not all eighteen tracks could have been included. As part of their promotional campaign, Glaser and Garner were trying to push an elevated price point. Yielding to market demand may have been the strategy of Columbia executives, but may, inadvertently, cheapened Garner’s product value in the long-run.

As the summer winded down, Garner and Glaser were able to officially close the chapter of the 1957-58 Parisian experience. It was time, again, for them to renew their artistic and managerial vows. On August 23, 1958, she wrote:

[I] still would like an appointment with you to discuss finances and other career factors. I think I have answers to most of your questions — although I can’t guarantee that they are the answers you’d like to hear. [B]ut unless someone close

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<sup>164</sup> Goddard Lieberman to Martha Glaser, 15 April 1959, Box 3, Folder 1, Correspondence 1957-1993, Erroll Garner Archive, University of Pittsburgh Library.

<sup>165</sup> “Music News: Faith, Conniff Prime Col’s May Pop Salvo,” *The Billboard*, 11 May 1959.

to you has a firm grip on reality, your career can collapse...and it is my job to keep it together...but [I] can't do it with pressures pulling me apart, from any source, and particularly from the boss. [I] hope we can work out a better formula for working together.<sup>166</sup>

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<sup>166</sup> Martha Glaser to Erroll Garner, 23 August 1958, Box 3, Folder 9, Correspondence 1957-1993, Erroll Garner Archive, University of Pittsburgh Library.

## 6.

## CONCLUSION

This paper attempts to recover and analyze the events that surrounded Erroll Garner's European tour in December 1957, culminating in the production of his album *Paris Impressions*.

Considering Garner's sour Parisian experience, the motivation for the eponymous album is a curious example of how he and Martha Glaser were able to capture his lived experiences and present them through his creative output. Using Becker's idea of an "art world" allows for a discussion that positions Garner at the center of a multi-layered analysis.

Garner's engagement at the Paris Olympia Theatre acts as the nexus of inspiration from which *Paris Impressions* was conceived. The suspected collusion between Jacques Canetti of Philips/Alhambra and Bruno Coquatrix at the Olympia Theatre in trying to manipulate Garner acted as a dramatic start to the tour. Even with the assistance of Al Avakian, Garner's French-speaking road manager, and the distant support from Columbia Records and Martha Glaser, Garner did not enjoy Paris. Regardless of his true feelings, upon his return, Glaser tried to guide his public demeanor in a way that would increase his chances of securing future tours abroad and broader exposure on the European front.

Situating Garner's Parisian experience between the release dates of *Concert By The Sea* (1955) and *Paris Impressions* (1958) offers insight in terms of his efforts in promoting the former album, the access to foreign markets that its success allowed, and the stimulus that the

trip provided for the latter. *Concert By The Sea* became the top-selling jazz record at Columbia, in part, because of the advertising efforts of Garner and Glaser. This, along with his success in drawing audiences - such as the Blackhawk engagement - elevated the demand for him enough to secure a trip to Europe. The inspiration acquired from the three weeks spent in Paris, and possibly the realization that the city's reaction to him would influence his future earning potential, would justify the desire to produce a dedication album soon after his return home. In addition, the LP's release provided momentum for more live performances, a relaunch of *Soliloquy*, and capitalizing on the publicity of his tour.

Placing Garner at the apex of the media's attention, particularly from the French and British jazz critics, allows analysis of the art world as it relates to linguistics, cultural attitudes, and the preservation of jazz historiography. For example, the language used by French critic, André Hodeir, was meant to criticize the visual and aural experience of an Erroll Garner concert as a veritable "cat-and-mouse" game. Conversely, British critic, James Roddan, endorsed Garner's claim the all great pianists have a "gimmick." During the late 1950s, French intermediaries were vying for coveted territory in the jazz art world. Not only had there been a decade of in-fighting between the "traditionalists" and "modernists" in the French press, the recent appearance of Miles Davis at the Olympia was a convenient occasion for them to compare Garner to his contemporaries. Comparing the archived correspondence to the publicized articles creates a synthesized view of the art world in which Garner was living.

By viewing Garner as the core to which all other parties reacted, his art became the focus, hinged upon his relationships and negotiating processes with industry executives, critics and impresarios. However, it is impossible to ignore the direct influence that Martha Glaser had in

the development of these relationships. The scope of this thesis presents a glimpse into their bond, owed to the availability of the extensive archive of her saved communications. For as much as Garner could be classified as a zenith in the art world, Glaser was a force in her own right. Her business acumen and uninhibited commitment to Garner's accomplishment leaves much more to be investigated regarding her unique contribution and their complex relationship. In uncovering some of the events of the 1957-58 tour and the connection to the subsequent album, *Paris Impressions*, a deeper understanding of Erroll Garner's experiences, creative impressions, and business relationships that enabled his achievement can be appreciated.

## APPENDIX A

### SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

Garner, Erroll. *Concert By The Sea*. Columbia Records. 1956. CL 883. Vinyl.

Garner, Erroll. *Erroll Garner: Sur Scène*. Philips Records. 1956. B07.170L. Vinyl.

Garner, Erroll. *Other Voices*. With Orchestra under the direction of Mitch Miller. Columbia Records. 1957. CL 1014. Vinyl.

Garner, Erroll. *Paris Impressions*. Columbia Records. 1958. C2L9. Vinyl.

Garner, Erroll. *Soliloquy*. Columbia Records. 1957. CL 1060. Vinyl.

Garner, Erroll. *The Complete Concert By The Sea*. Columbia Records. 2015. 88875120842. Compact Disc.

## APPENDIX B

### ARCHIVAL MATERIALS

Martha Glaser to Erroll Garner, 7 February 1956, Box 3, Folder 2, Correspondence 1957-1993, Erroll Garner Archive, University of Pittsburgh Library.

Martha Glaser to Erroll Garner, 6 March 1956, Box 3, Folder 2, Correspondence 1957-1993, Erroll Garner Archive, University of Pittsburgh Library.

Martha Glaser to Erroll Garner, 9 March 1956, Box 3, Folder 2, Correspondence 1957-1993, Erroll Garner Archive, University of Pittsburgh Library.

Martha Glaser to Erroll Garner, 14 March 1956, Box 3, Folder 2, Correspondence 1957-1993, Erroll Garner Archive, University of Pittsburgh Library.

Martha Glaser to Erroll Garner, 7 November 1956, Box 3, Folder 2, Correspondence 1957-1993, Erroll Garner Archive, University of Pittsburgh Library.

Martha Glaser to Erroll Garner, 9 November 1956, Box 3, Folder 2, Correspondence 1957-1993, Erroll Garner Archive, University of Pittsburgh Library.

Martha Glaser to Erroll Garner, 12 January 1957, Box 3, Folder 7, Correspondence 1957-1993, Erroll Garner Archive, University of Pittsburgh Library.

Martha Glaser to Francee Church, 12 January 1957, Box 3, Folder 7, Correspondence 1957-1993, Erroll Garner Archive, University of Pittsburgh Library.

Martha Glaser to Nat Shapiro, 30 January 1957, Box 3, Folder 7, Correspondence 1957-1993, Erroll Garner Archive, University of Pittsburgh Library.

Francee Church to Martha Glaser, 1 May 1957, Box 3, Folder 1, Correspondence 1957-1993, Erroll Garner Archive, University of Pittsburgh Library.

Martha Glaser to Erroll Garner, 2 May 1957, Box 3, Folder 7, Correspondence 1957-1993, Erroll Garner Archive, University of Pittsburgh Library.

Martha Glaser to Mike Kaplan, 2 May 1957, Box 3, Folder 1, Correspondence 1957-1993, Erroll Garner Archive, University of Pittsburgh Library.

Martha Glaser to Erroll Garner, 21 May 1957, Box 3, Folder 2, Correspondence 1957-1993, Erroll Garner Archive, University of Pittsburgh Library.

Martha Glaser to Erroll Garner, 10 September 1957, Box 3, Folder 2, Correspondence 1957-1993, Erroll Garner Archive, University of Pittsburgh Library.

Martha Glaser to Erroll Garner, 23 September 1957, Box 3, Folder 7, Correspondence 1957-1993, Erroll Garner Archive, University of Pittsburgh Library.

Joe Glaser to Martha Glaser, 5 November 1957, Box 3, Folder 1, Correspondence 1957-1993, Erroll Garner Archive, University of Pittsburgh Library.

Martha Glaser to Erroll Garner, 6 November 1957, Box 3, Folder 2, Correspondence 1957-1993, Erroll Garner Archive, University of Pittsburgh Library.

Erroll Garner to Hughes Panassié, 10 November 1957, Box 3, Folder 1, Correspondence 1957-1993, Erroll Garner Archive, University of Pittsburgh Library.

Martha Glaser to Erroll Garner, 10 November 1957, Box 3, Folder 2, Correspondence 1957-1993, Erroll Garner Archive, University of Pittsburgh Library.

Martha Glaser to Erroll Garner, 16 November 1957, Box 3, Folder 2, Correspondence 1957-1993, Erroll Garner Archive, University of Pittsburgh Library.

Erroll Garner to Joe Glaser, 18 November 1957, Box 3, Folder 2, Correspondence 1957-1993, Erroll Garner Archive, University of Pittsburgh Library.

Martha Glaser to Al Avakian, 6 December 1957, Box 3, Folder 1, Correspondence 1957-1993, Erroll Garner Archive, University of Pittsburgh Library.

Martha Glaser to Al Avakian, 8 December 1957, Box 3, Folder 1, Correspondence 1957-1993, Erroll Garner Archive, University of Pittsburgh Library.

Martha Glaser to Goddard Lieberson, 8 December 1957, Box 3, Folder 1, Correspondence 1957-1993, Erroll Garner Archive, University of Pittsburgh Library.

Martha Glaser to Al Avakian, 9 December 1957, Box 3, Folder 1, Correspondence 1957-1993, Erroll Garner Archive, University of Pittsburgh Library.



Martha Glaser to radio stations, 9 December 1957, Box 3, Folder 1, Correspondence 1957-1993, Erroll Garner Archive, University of Pittsburgh Library.

Martha Glaser to Sam Elber, 9 December 1957, Box 3, Folder 2, Correspondence 1957-1993, Erroll Garner Archive, University of Pittsburgh Library.

Erroll Garner to Martha Glaser, 20 December 1957, Box 3, Folder 5, Correspondence 1957-1993, Erroll Garner Archive, University of Pittsburgh Library.

Martha Glaser to Erroll Garner, 9 January 1958, Box 3, Folder 9, Correspondence 1957-1993, Erroll Garner Archive, University of Pittsburgh Library.

Martha Glaser to Erroll Garner, 16 January 1958, Box 3, Folder 9, Correspondence 1957-1993, Erroll Garner Archive, University of Pittsburgh Library.

Martha Glaser to Erroll Garner, 3 February 1958, Box 3, Folder 9, Correspondence 1957-1993, Erroll Garner Archive, University of Pittsburgh Library.

Martha Glaser to Erroll Garner, 22 February 1958, Box 3, Folder 9, Correspondence 1957-1993, Erroll Garner Archive, University of Pittsburgh Library.

Martha Glaser to Erroll Garner, 24 February 1958, Box 3, Folder 9, Correspondence 1957-1993, Erroll Garner Archive, University of Pittsburgh Library.

Martha Glaser to Erroll Garner, 4 March 1958, Box 3, Folder 9, Correspondence 1957-1993, Erroll Garner Archive, University of Pittsburgh Library.

Martha Glaser to Erroll Garner, 29 May 1958, Box 3, Folder 9, Correspondence 1957-1993, Erroll Garner Archive, University of Pittsburgh Library.

Martha Glaser to Erroll Garner, 14 June 1958, Box 3, Folder 9, Correspondence 1957-1993, Erroll Garner Archive, University of Pittsburgh Library.

Martha Glaser to Erroll Garner, 25 July 1958, Box 3, Folder 9, Correspondence 1957-1993, Erroll Garner Archive, University of Pittsburgh Library.

Martha Glaser to Erroll Garner, 23 August 1958, Box 3, Folder 9, Correspondence 1957-1993, Erroll Garner Archive, University of Pittsburgh Library.

Goddard Lieberman to Martha Glaser, 15 April 1959, Box 3, Folder 1, Correspondence 1957-1993, Erroll Garner Archive, University of Pittsburgh Library.

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